

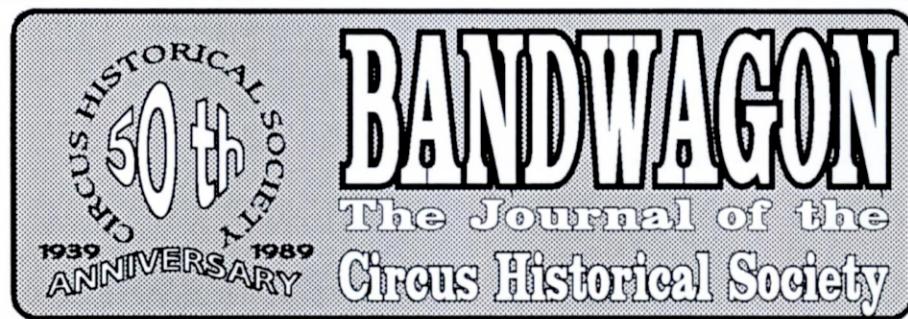
Bud E. Anderson Circus 1944-1945

# BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

July-August 1989





Vol. 33, No. 4

FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor; Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

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The No. 2 reserved seat ticket wagon of the Ringling-Barnum Circus is pictured on the cover. The slide was taken in 1953 by Don F. Smith.

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#### CORRECTION

Two photos published in the Dorothy Herbert article in the May-June *Bandwagon* were not correctly dated.

The Cole Bros. train unloading photo was taken in 1943 or 1944 not in 1940. The photo of the Dailey Bros. winter quarters was taken in 1948 not 1945.

#### THE PRESIDENT COMMENTS

The generosity of Circus Historical Society members continues to overwhelm me. Over 200 good souls became Sustaining, Contributing, or Concessionaires Club members at dues times which translates to around an extra \$3200 in the treasury. Both figures are new records. This assures the continued large *Bandwagon* and stalls any



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CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY		May 1, 1988 to April 30, 1989
FINANCIAL STATEMENT		
Cash beginning 5/1/88:		
Savings Account	5,460.64	
Checking Account	12.84	
Total	5,473.48	
RECEIPTS		
Dues	25,475.69	
Subscriptions	2,445.00	
Back Issue Sales	1,435.30	
Advertising	3,345.00	
Bank Interest	1,172.18	
1988 Convention and Auction	9,208.50	
Miscellaneous	654.08	
Total	43,735.75	
EXPENSES		
Bandwagon Printing	34,398.58	
Supplies & Misc. Expenses	1,427.32	
Postage	1,279.04	
1988 Convention	4,601.00	
Bank Service Charges	75.00	
Total	41,780.94	
BEGINNING CASH	5,473.48	
Receipts	43,735.75	
Postage & Petty Cash	64.00	
Less Expenses	49,273.23	
ENDING BALANCE ON HAND	41,780.94	
	\$7,492.29	

Submitted by Johann W. Dahlinger, Secretary-Treasurer

## Red Wagons and White Canvas A Story of the Mollie Bailey Circus

By Marj Gurasich

Almost everyone has a fantasy of running away to join a traveling circus. Jeremiah Colquitt did just that and became a protege of Mollie Bailey. Known affectionately by several generations of Texans as "Aunt Mollie," she ran the famous Mollie A. Bailey Show for almost half a century. She called it "a Texas show for Texas people." But the author's biography of this colorful lady entrepreneur is for everyone who loves the circus. The author, who grew up in Gary, Indiana, and now lives in Houston, not only researched the life of Mollie Bailey but also the traveling circus of that turn-of-the-century era. While the story reads like a novel, the author is faithful in depicting this storybook circus queen. Even Jeremiah, whom Mollie called "Cotton," had a real life counterpart. 5 3/4 x 8 3/4, illustrated, glossary of circus terms and extensive bibliography.

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Seasons of 1944 and 1945

# BUD E. ANDERSON'S Great American Victory Circus

By Joseph T. Bradbury

A letter dated March 1, 1946 from Bud Anderson to Bill Kasiska in the Pfening Archives advises that he had recently sold his circus to Floyd King and Harold Rumbaugh. Anderson noted that this was the third [motorized] circus he had built and sold. They all made money and were sold at a profit. He said he always wanted to go to Canada to build a show and live there but as he was then 51 years old, owned quite a bit of land and stock at Emporia, Kansas, he felt he was too old to change and would stay put.

Bud E. Anderson indeed had framed at least three successful circuses, operated them a few years and then sold out. Laying off a season or so he would repeat the process. However his circus career was not concluded after selling his third truck circus. He later built and operated still another show.

This article will focus on Anderson's next to last circus. His shows were not short lived but stayed on the road at least two seasons before being sold. Each was an active and profitable organization. Although most attention will be given to the 1945 season, in reality the show was on the road in 1944 on a somewhat smaller scale.

A 1941 letter from Anderson in the author's collection advises he had been in the circus business for thirty years, meaning that he would have gone on the road around 1911 as a teenager. He was an accomplished horseman and trainer of domestic stock. All photos show him in typical western garb, ten gallon hat and all. A complete documentary of his early years in show business is not available. His 1950 obituary sheds some light on his early career. In 1915 he had started in the circus business with a tiny one ring dog and pony show in Emporia. Anderson's first love was horses and he had been successful in training them. He worked horses all of his life, first in rodeos--riding, roping and bulldogging--and then in wild west shows. In his early days he often said he always wanted to be the owner and his work mostly was as manager and owner of small circuses. His first show was his own dog and pony circus which he opened before the first world war with a performance on vacant lots across Congress Street from Humbolt Park in Emporia.

In 1945 Anderson told the *Emporia Gazette*: "It's been a pretty good thirty years. I expect I really liked the rodeos and wild



Bud E. Anderson owner of the Great American Victory Circus. Pfening Archives.

west shows best and in thirty years I've never had a pair of shoes on my feet--always liked boots the best. I've traveled a lot of thousands of miles over the United States but I've never seen anything prettier than the Kansas Flint hills. But I'll always be on the road; show business gets in your blood."

An interview with Anderson's son, Norman, appearing in the June 28, 1952 *Billboard* sheds additional light on his father's career.

Norman says his father tramped in Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska thirty years earlier. Titles used in the early days included Indian Bud's Wild West and Oklahoma Bud's Wild West.

Norman's first memories of his father's shows are of a wagon circus called Anderson Bros. around 1924. By 1927 this show began

using trucks but still used some wagons, and was not completely motorized until 1931. By this time it was called Seal Bros.

It was with the Seal show that Bud scored during the depression. At the time of his death the local paper recalled that the senior Anderson was minting money with his show when other businesses were struggling to stay alive. Norman reported that 1934 through 1936 were his father's big seasons.

Things weren't always so good for Bud Anderson. Three times he went broke. But in each case he had ventured too far from the circus business and he recouped his losses by returning to the white tops.

All of Anderson's shows were built and quartered on his property on Highway 50 just outside Emporia, Kansas. Over the years he built adequate buildings to house his stock and equipment. One building constructed in the mid 1930s was described in the *Billboard* as being a ring barn, 34 by 70 feet in size. Seal Bros. presented a fine street parade and when it was sold following the 1937 season to Charles Parker and Ira M. Watts the new owners continued the tradition of the daily march making it an advertised feature during the two seasons they operated the Parker and Watts Circus in 1938 and 1939.

Bud Anderson was with Norris Bros. in 1938 but when the 1939 season came around he had framed a new circus using the title Bud E. Anderson Circus. This show had five elephants in 1939 and the herd was up to seven for the 1940 and 1941 seasons. Three of his elephants were youngsters he had purchased from the creditors of Cole Bros. when that show went bankrupt in 1938. Although Cole continued in 1939 it was reduced in size and excess animals and equipment was sold.

This Anderson show prospered and possibly would have continued on the scene for some years had not Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941 taking the United States into war. The future looked so uncertain that Anderson decided to close up shop and not go on the road in 1942. He sold much of the equipment piecemeal including at least four of the elephants. But he retained ownership



Billstand posted in Washington, Kansas in 1944. Bill Green photo.

of the remaining three in 1942, according to the Woodcock files. He later disposed of them.

Anderson remained off the road for the first season of the war. In 1943 he decided to build another circus and put it on the road. This article is the story of that show.

The January 16, 1943 *Billboard* announced that Bud E. Anderson would launch a new show in the spring. Anderson had just returned from Greencastle, Indiana where he had bought the equipment of the former King Bros. Circus, operated in 1942 by wild animal trainer Allen King. Included in the purchase were 700 grandstand chairs, nineteen lengths of 12 high blues, all of the canvas and the light plant. He reported that the show would move on ten trucks. Much of his former circus equipment and animals were still in quarters.

A story in the January 30 *Billboard* reported the title of the new show would be the Great American Victory Circus. John Foss had been signed as general agent and Kokomo Anders was to be legal adjuster. Foss had a thirty foot whale in storage at the quarters in Emporia. It was to be with the show. In early March Anderson was advertising for performers, bosses and workingmen. He offered an 80 foot round top with three 30s for sale.

An article in the March 6 *Billboard* said Anderson was still buying equipment. He had just returned from St. Louis, Missouri after purchasing five trucks and semi-trailers. He had also bought the Ray Marsh Brydon side show equipment complete. A new semi-trailer formally owned by Buck Owens was added. It was to be rebuilt into an office and ticket wagon.

Very little was printed about the Anderson show in the trade publications. The opening date is unknown; however, the show was in Washington, Missouri on May 13 and in Wood River, Illinois the next day. One report had the show on fourteen trucks

when it closed in May somewhere in Illinois. The war time conditions and the lack of personnel may have caused him to throw in the towel for the season.

On July 19 Anderson and his wife Dorothy joined the James M. Cole Circus in Fulton, New York. He presented his liberty horse act and his elephant Eva in the 1943 Cole performance.

The January 1, 1944 *Billboard* informed the circus world of Anderson's plans to operate a circus during the upcoming season when he advertised to buy for cash good elephants and a wish to hear from performers, musicians and useful people in all departments. Privileges were for sale. Those interested were advised to contact him in Emporia, Kansas.

However it was late February before any real details concerning the show appeared in the trade publications. The February 26 *Billboard* stated the Bud E. Anderson Circus would open in Emporia, Kansas early in April. A new four pole big top, a 70 with three 30s, had been ordered. The side show top was to be a 40 by 80 push pole with a new double deck bannerline. The show had received a new air calliope and would be transported on ten trucks back with one auto and one truck ahead. Some of the vehicles would be semi-trailers.

The *Billboard* article stated the new circus would have several animal acts, an elephant, an eight horse liberty act, four menage horses, a six pony drill, a pick-out pony and eight performing mules. Part of this stock would double in the after-show concert. Bud and his wife were to present their trick and horse roping numbers, whip cracking and horses Tonto and Tumbleweed in the concert. Their son Norman was also to be with the show.

In the same *Billboard* the show advertised for a family act, single acts, useful people in all lines, animal acts and a side show manager. Anderson also wanted to buy hay-eating, trained or untrained animals.

In mid-March the show advertised for canvas and seat men, cookhouse help, a general superintendent, menage riders, girls for swinging ladders, and as usual, useful people in all lines. Marion Clark, John Dusch and J. S. Ramsey were asked to wire the Emporia quarters. The ad concluded advising there would be an early April opening.

An ad appearing a week later noted the show would open April 7 at Emporia. Wanted were workingmen, \$25.00 per week and up. Useful acts and circus people were asked to write at once. H. J. Lane and the Sylvesters were requested to write.

Only a week before the scheduled opening the show advertised for an outside lunch stand to serve the public and showfolks. Those interested were requested to write or wire for a

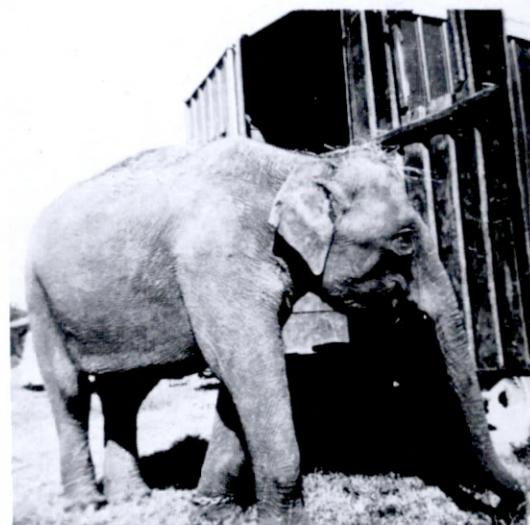
proposition. Workingmen were asked to come on to quarters.

A short note appearing in the same *Billboard* quoted Si Rubens of the Bud Anderson Circus as saying that the Fuller Family (Luther, Bernice, Bonnie, Gale and Charles) and stock were to join the show. Another elephant had been added and Nadean McKay had joined as a menage rider. The short piece noted that the Andersons had bought a new three room trailer as living quarters on the road.

The April 8 *Billboard* announced the show's opening had been postponed to April 21 because the tent manufacturer would not be able to deliver the new big top until April 15. Considerable information was given about the Anderson show in the article. General agent H. J. Lane was to contract the show and the advance would consist of four billers and two trucks with a new line of paper. The new side show top would be a 40 by 100, a little larger than originally announced and would have a new double deck banners. In the Emporia quarters manager Bud Anderson; E. L. Filbert, assistant; Si Rubens, secretary-treasurer; Lee Garner in charge of front door and reserves and Ted Wilson, side show manager were getting the show ready for the road. Doc Ford and wife who were to do three acts in the performance had arrived. John Dusch was to have the band of eight pieces plus air calliope. Joe Franklin, Hazel Steffen, the Fuller Family of five were to be with it. Elephants had been leased from W. C. Richards of Pensacola, Florida. The article closed by stating the show had twenty-five head of trained horses, ponies and mules.

Show inspired claims to the contrary in all probability there was only one elephant on Anderson in 1944. W. C. Richards, according to the Woodcock files, owned a single

Suzie-Q the show's only elephant in Columbus, Kansas in 1944. Bill Green photo.



elephant, Suzi-Q, which constituted the Bud Anderson elephant herd in 1945 for certain, and also probably did the same in 1944.

The expected delivery of the new big top on April 15 did not materialize making it necessary to further delay the opening. Finally it was set for a two day stand in Emporia on April 28-29.

Just before the initial stand there was an interesting advertisement in the *Billboard*. It announced the time and place of the Bud Anderson opening, then stated the show wanted to hear from Mickey O'Brien, Doe Boy, Humpy Etheridge and others. Showfolks reading the ad knew immediately the Bud Anderson show would operate with a certain type of side show or in some instances midway concessions common to many of the smaller and medium size shows of the day, both motorized and railroad. Over the next two seasons there were a number of references to the show having, or advertising for grab bag, pitch and other concessions usually associated with carnivals. The Humpy Etheridge who the show wanted to respond was a well known side show "concessionaire," specializing in three card monte [broads] and shell game [nuts]. Regardless of what side show concessions the show ended up with, Bud Anderson, personally, and as a showman had an excellent reputation among his peers.

The show opened April 28 in Emporia. In spite of terrific rains opening day and again on the 29th, there were four packed houses. The *Billboard* did not cover the initial performance as was customary for most shows and it was not until several weeks later that a full comprehensive report appeared. At no time was a complete listing of the performance lineup given. Only bits and pieces were noted. The program was heavily oriented towards trained domestic stock with much of it being of a wild west flavor. On the midway was a standard side show plus a second pit show, a whale exhibit. There are no details of exactly what was presented in the whale show but no doubt there was an embalmed whale plus smaller sea creatures and assorted marine artifacts.

In the spring of 1944, in the midst of World War II much of the economy was regulated by Washington. Virtually all items of equipment needed by a circus were in short supply and difficult to obtain. It is remarkable the show was able to obtain a new big top and adequate trucks, tires and other necessities in order to operate. Gasoline of course was heavily rationed but an executive decision made at the outset of the war decreed that circuses, for civilian as well as stateside based military morale, were permitted to operate. That meant the motorized circuses could obtain the needed petroleum



Light plant truck on the Anderson lot in Columbus, Kansas in 1944. Bill Green photo.

products and rail shows transportation permits. Manpower was one of the biggest problems for all shows in 1944. The military draft was in full force and as the lyrics of a popular song of the day went the women lamented on the supply of men available, "they're either too young or too old." However even with the shortage of workingmen and performers the potential for big money was so tempting many circus owners, such as Anderson, who had given up their shows at the start of the war now got back into the business. It was worth the trouble. Many of the wartime newcomers as well as some of the oldsters who got back into the circus game soon faltered and suffered short seasons. But Bud Anderson was not among that number. His new circus was a success from the start.

After Emporia the show remained in Kansas for four more dates. All produced excellent business with the exception of the stand following Emporia at Eskridge which was hurt because of recent floods in the area. Other Kansas stands were at Osage, Ottawa and Olathe. The show then moved to Missouri for stands at Pleasant Hill, Odessa, Lexington, Higginsville, Clinton, Sedalia, Marshall, Moberly, Mexico, Hannibal and Canton on May 13. A short note in the *Billboard* dated at the time the show played Canton said business had been very good, with capacity houses at many places.

News coverage was scant for the first weeks of the season. One brief report said Tedd Meyers visited the show at Ottawa on May 2 and confirmed the show had a new big top and a good band.

Several *Billboard* ads were published by the show in May. One wanted useful people in all lines, performers, clowns, musicians, grab joints and a side show manager. Carl Stone, Marion Jordan and Frank Chandler were asked to phone the

circus secretary as per the route. Another was for workingmen at \$25 per week, cookhouse and concession help. Also wanted were seat butchers and novelties. All interested were advised to come on right away.

The June 3 *Billboard* carried an Anderson ad which in addition to the usual pitch for general help, he wanted extra clowns and animals to enlarge the show. He also still needed a side show manager plus side show acts and six sets of Shetland pony trappings.

The show moved into Iowa May 17 at Keokuk to play fifteen stands in that state.

After completing the Iowa tour at Osage, on May 31 it moved to Minnesota at Albert Lea. The Minnesota tour lasted thirty-eight days. Some notes in the *Billboard* included a bit from J. McFarland who wrote that the Anderson Victory Circus did good business in Rochester as well as other Minnesota dates. The mention of Bud Anderson American Victory Circus indicates the show was continuing the use of that title in 1944.

Other *Billboard* items said that Franko Richards, son of W. C. Richards from whom the elephant was rented, and who evidently had been on the show looking after the animal, was in the Mayo Hospital in Rochester, and that Lester Garner was then working the bull. Doc Ford was directing the big show program which was going smoothly. Bud Anderson and Buck Lucas had a snappy wild west concert featuring Faith King and her horse Poncha. She also had a fourteen dog act in the big show.

The show played Montevideo, Minnesota on June 21, and remained in that state for the rest of the month appearing in Willmar, St. Cloud, Sauk Centre, Wadena, Fergus Falls, Detroit Lakes and Park Rapids. The Minnesota portion of the tour continued into July with the show being at Bagley on the first of the month and was followed by Black Duck the next day. The circus was in International Falls on July 3 and 4.

The whale pit show on the Anderson midway in 1944. Bill Green photo.



The *Billboard* noted in headlines that "Anderson hits red one at International Falls, Minnesota." The story stated that three performances were given on July 3 and three the following day. Even with all of these performances still some were turned away. The side show, under Carl Stone, ran from 10 a.m. until 1 a.m. and did big business. Dutch LeBlair had a big day with his candy stand. Performance items noted that Marion Jordan and Jack McCurry had joined at Wadena on June 27. The former was doing ladders, iron jaw and working the elephant act as well as teaching Donna Anderson and Neta Garner ladders and web. McCurry was on reserve tickets. Mike Pyne now had the advance brigade. Faith King still had the prize act of the show, a twenty-four dog act. Buck Lucas was holding three fourths of the crowd for the concert and Bud Anderson was currently working his six ponies in the main performance. In concluding, the report noted that Doc Ford had to hang rigging and Bill Ehr's whale show was doing okay business.

Leaving the great date in International Falls the show continued its Minnesota route by playing Baudetta the next day, followed by Roseau, Thief River Falls, Warren and Stephen on July 9. Next it moved on to North Dakota.

The July 29 *Billboard* carried a most informative article concerning the show. Dated July 8, the day the show played Warren, said that Minnesota business had been great for Bud Anderson. Entering the state at Albert Lea June 1 the show had covered the state's larger cities presenting a pleasing program and moving every day in spite of the scarcity of workingmen. Good towns were Albert Lea, Austin, Rochester, Mankato, St. Cloud, Little Falls and International Falls.

At St. Cloud the circus set up on Lake George Park playground, one block off the intersection of the main streets in the city of 25,000. The Anderson show broke all precedent by doing turn away business in the afternoon and a full house at night in spite of Cole Bros. wait paper. St Cloud was noted as a railroad show town.

The new white big top was a 70 with three 30s. The side show also had new canvas and a flashy 100 foot bannerline. The midway was further dressed with new brilliant blue canvas of the tent housing the whale exhibit. The ticket wagon was a white enameled semi-trailer emblazoned with red, white and blue scroll and lettering.

The show was moving on sixteen semi-trailers with a color scheme of red with yellow lettering. A dozen new house trailers provided homes for executives and performing personnel. The light plant wagon with two generators driven by Ford Model A engines, together with a smaller light plant in the backyard kept the show as bright as day. The show's grandstand was made up of about 700 first class chairs. Circus blues

completed the encirclement of the track.

The piece concluded with a note that Carl Woolrich had a swell small band and a new air calliope in the front yard was played one hour before show time. The show's personnel numbered 85.

The July 9 date at Stephen, Minnesota had been billed for only one performance, a matinee, but so great were the crowds, two shows were given. The side show handled about 3,000 people during the day. The first stand

SEE THE BUD E. ANDERSON Circus  
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**Beware of Prowlers and Short Change Artists**

### This Is All Just A Fact.

**Bud E. Anderson, Mgr.**

*Bud E. Anderson Circus*

Bud Anderson distributed this rat sheet in Rugby, North Dakota in 1944. Anderson played there on July 14 and Dailey on July 27. Pfening Archives.

in North Dakota, Grafton on July 10, saw three performances given, all to packed houses.

Moving on through North Dakota the show was at Cando July 13 and Rugby the 14th, which was a marvelous stand with three performances, all to capacity houses.

The North Dakota tour was an extensive one playing twenty-seven dates, finishing at Crosby on August 7. The *Billboard* reported the show gave three performances at Rugby, North Dakota each with capacity business. An ad in the July 29 *Billboard* wanted side show acts of all kinds as well as a good family troupe for the big top. Dutch LeBlair wanted two good butchers. Seat men and workingmen were needed and asked to come on per route. A delayed report in the August 12 *Billboard* noted that the show had been getting capacity to turn away business in North Dakota. It also reported that Shorty Lynn, the boss canvasman, had left and was replaced by Joe Applegate. Arch Johnston was his assistant. Doc Ford and Carl Stone likewise were no longer with the show. Tom Gorman had the banners and was on the front

door. A final item reported that three new trucks had been purchased, all late models.

It is not known if these trucks increased the total number of vehicles or were merely replacements. Recent reports had the show moving on sixteen trucks. In all probability the show remained on ten trucks all season.

The show moved into Montana at Froid on August 8 followed by Scoby, Wolf Point and Circle. On August 12 Beach, North Dakota was played. On August 13 Baker, Montana was shown before going back to North Dakota for three stands.

On August 17 the show went into South Dakota at Lemmon. Thirteen stands were played in that state closing the tour in Gregory on August 29.

The September 9 *Billboard* reported that Bud Anderson had played a red one in Winner, South Dakota on August 28. The matinee found some patrons seated on the straw and that night the tent was packed to capacity. The side show and whale show also did big business. It mentioned that Marion Jordan had left the show at Presho, South Dakota. She was replaced by Neta Garner in all of her acts. The Nelson Sisters joined doing double traps, web and tight wire. Lucille Nelson was working the elephant act for Franco Richards who evidently was still away from the show.

The article continued stating for the prior few weeks Buck Lucas had been getting a large percentage of the audience for the after show and Leo Hurlt was then handling concessions. Bill Ehr was the owner and manager of the whale show which was housed in a blue tent with a blue marquee to match.

A week later the show advertised asking for Andy Kelly, Frenchy Moore, Mickey O'Brien and other concession people to get in touch with Harry Fitch.

On August 30 the show entered Nebraska to play Butte followed by O'Neil, Neligh, Albion, Genoa, Seward and Wilber. A Kansas tour started in Washington on September 6. The ten Kansas dates concluded in Chetopa on September 15.

Two dates were played in Missouri at Seneca and Anderson before going into Arkansas on the 17th at Siloam Springs, followed by Springdale, Huntsville, Fayetteville, Rogers and Bentonville. A two day stand was played in Aurora, Missouri on September 24 and 25. The twelve day Missouri concluded in Doniphan on October 6.

The season closed with seventeen more stands in Arkansas and six dates in Oklahoma. The show had been booked through November 5 but closed in Hominy, Oklahoma on November 1 due to poor business.

Bandleader Carl Woolrich who had been mail man on the Anderson show in 1944 published a season route sheet. When he mailed a copy of the sheet to Bill Kasiska on November 11 he included a short note. It read; ". . . we had a very nice season and I believe the show as a whole made plenty of

money. We closed four days before we played out our route, as business had not been good for the last ten days before we closed."

The October 7 *Billboard* reported it had been a winning season for Bud Anderson. The show had been on the road for 23 weeks and all had been winners. Huntsville, Bentonville and Rogers, Arkansas were big. Mr. and Mrs. Lee Bennett had taken over the side show. Tom Gorman had left. The piece concluded by saying that Kid Hunt was back working for Harry Fitch.

The name Kid Hunt was one well known in circus circles from the late teens through the 1930s. His real name was Thaddeus Gerig, but he always went under the moniker of Kid Hunt. He was one of the owners, along with Rhoda Royal and D. C. Hawn, of the Rhoda Royal Circus of 1919-1922. The late W. H. Woodcock, Sr. once told the author he knew Kid Hunt when both were on the Royal show. He said Hunt was one of the fastest and best nut players [shell game] ever. Whether or not he was still displaying his skills in this department while on the Bud Anderson show is not known.

This was the last report of substance from the show for the remainder of the season. It was announced in late October that Jack McFarland who recently had left the Anderson show had moved to Bailey Bros. where he had the banners.

From all reports Bud Anderson had done well in wartime 1944. Even with the war continuing he planned to try it again in 1945.

The early winter of 1944-45 had been gloomy. News from the war fronts around the world had not been good. The Battle of the Bulge in Belgium and the stalemate in Italy had been stark reminders that victory in Europe was still some time in the future. In the Pacific the island hopping of American forces seemed to be a never ending process with Toyko still a jillion miles away. Fortunately after only a few weeks into 1945 the war picture was much brighter with the Allies again on the move on several fronts in Europe as well as in the Pacific. Regardless of the war situation there were more circuses getting ready to make the new season than at any time in the recent memory.

The January 5 *Billboard* reported that the Bud Anderson Circus was readying for the coming season and planning to open the first week of April. The show was to be enlarged and travel on fifteen trucks. New sleeping trucks for the help had been received as well as a new 25 k.w. light plant and truck complete. Si Rubens, secretary-treasurer, had returned to the quarters in Emporia. Bud and Dorothy Anderson

were back from a vacation. The office was being enlarged. The same issue carried an Anderson advertisement to buy for cash two camels, two llamas and two zebras, all halter broken. They also wanted trained animal acts of all kinds.

Another ad in the next week's issue read; "Bud Anderson Circus wants. Ball game and penny pitch. Mickey O'Brien, Chester Gregory, Mac Carthy and others interested contact me. Opening April 10. H. H. Fitch, Arkansas Pass Texas."

From this ad it appeared the show would again be operating certain side show and midway concessions during the 1945 season and that Fitch would again be in charge as he was at the end of the 1944 tour.

In late February it was announced that Bud Anderson and Si Rubens had returned to Emporia from Chicago and the midwest where they had bought two zebras, two zebras and two llamas from John D. Wixon of Big Bend, Wisconsin. Also purchased were a cage of twenty Rhesus monkeys and four albino mules. New canvas had been purchased from the O'Henry Tent Co. of Chicago.

The *Billboard* reported that the Bud Anderson show would be larger than the prior year with several new trucks being added. The office semi was being enlarged and a new sleeping trailer had been purchased for the band. Horses, ponies, mules and dogs were being trained in quarters.

Among those contracted for the season were Joe B. Webb, equestrian director; Joe Applegate, boss canvasman; Pappy Johnston, assistant to Applegate; Dad Sieh, seat man and Cliff Jones, elephant man. Performers in addition to Bud and Dorothy Anderson were to be Jimmy and Barney Arenson; Chief Clarence Keys and troupe; J. M. Buckley's dogs and monkeys; Leo Snyder and wife; DeKohl troupe; Wilkins Family of four and Chappell's high act. A. Lee Hinckley was to have the band. C. E. Iller was to be chief mechanic and J. S. Jones chief electrician.

The side show was to be managed by Leon Bennett, assisted by his wife Cleo. Happy

Letterhead used by Anderson in 1944 and 1945. It is printed in red, white and blue and featured photos of Bud and Dorothy Anderson. Pfening Archives.

Newspaper ad used in 1945 for the Bud Anderson show in Benkelman, Nebraska. Joe Fleming collection.

and Marie Loter and Francis Doran were to be with it. Red Sweaters was to be side show boss canvas man. Mrs. Eva Hinckley was to have charge of the concessions. Verne Crawford and wife were to have the snow cones and soft drinks and A. Zingaro the novelties. Harry Fitch was to again be legal adjuster. The cookhouse was to be managed by Mrs. Doran and the after show concert was to be presented by Bud and Dorothy Anderson, assisted by Chief Keys, Leo Snyder and part of the Wilkins Family.

An advertisement appearing in the *Billboard* in mid-February wanted more hay eating animals and big monkeys. Also wanted were a man or man and wife to operate the pit show complete with transportation. "Can use a few useful circus people and acts. Also A-1 banner man and one lithographer. Dime Wilson please write. Show will open in April and long season promised."

It appears much of the enlargement of the 1945 show over the previous season was in the additional menagerie





animals and lead stock carried. A large truck was constructed to house the zebus and more vehicles were needed for the increased number of hay eating animals.

The March 24 *Billboard* said that new ring stock, two camels for the menagerie, as well as new canvas had been added to the Bud Anderson Circus. Bud was breaking new liberty pony and liberty horse acts as well as high school horses. In the article another run down of the performance was listed which said that set for the program were the DeKohls; the Snyders; Chief and Tillie Keys; Marie and Happy Loter; the Wilkins Family; J. F. Buckley with dogs and monkeys; the Bennetts and the Arensons. A. Lee Hinckley would have an eight piece band. Frank Zangaro would have the novelties; W. Hunt would have the grab joint, cookhouse, candy, floss and the pit show. Staff members included Jack Collins, general agent; H. J. Lane, brigade with three panel trucks; Harry Fitch, legal adjuster and Si Rubens, secretary. Pappy Johnson was in charge of the quarters and was being assisted by Joe Aplegate, Jack McCreary and twenty working men.

A *Billboard* article appearing just prior to the opening said the show would open April 12 with a three day stand at the show's quarters town of Emporia, Kansas. The first move of the season was to be to Newton,

Bud Anderson side show bannerline, midway, candy stands and marquee in 1945. Pfening Archives.

Huge bill daub posted for the Anderson show at Benkleman for the May 6 date. Pfening Archives.

Kansas on April 16. The story said band leader A. Lee Hinckley had been in charge of painting and dressing the show, using canary yellow on the trucks with red and blue lettering. This indicated a change of color scheme for the vehicles from the previous year. It was announced that a baby camel, born Easter morning, would be featured in the menagerie. A concluding item said many visits were paid to Floyd King's wild life exhibit in downtown Emporia. This note is interesting since Floyd King and his partner Harold Rumbaugh would purchase Bud Anderson's circus at the conclusion of the 1945 season. Evidently while his wildlife show was playing in Emporia Floyd King became well acquainted with the Bud Anderson properties.

Just prior to the start of the season it was announced that Tom Aiton would be in charge of the Anderson advance brigade forces.

The show opened with a three day stand in Emporia April 12-14. These dates were listed in the season route sheet. A two day stand was listed for April 15-16 in Newton, Kansas. It seems possibly because of bad weather the first announced date of April 12 was cancelled and the initial performance took place on April 13, at least the April 28 *Billboard* which covered the event said that not even rain could dampen spirits of Bud E. Anderson as the 1945 edition of his Victory Circus

opened at Emporia on April 13. The article said the show had a bright new dress with all of the vehicles painted yellow and lettered in red. All new side show banners had been newly painted. The program offered the DeKohls, Frazier Family, Wilkins Family, Chief Keys and wife, and Anderson's stock. The band had seven pieces. Joe B. Webb was equestrian director.

On the midway were Harry (Specks) Cauzin and W. Hunt who had the candy floss, pit show and cookhouse; Frank Zangaro, novelties; Verne Crawford, snow cones and Mrs. Lee Hinckley, peanuts and popcorn. Leon Bennett managed the side show which had eight displays and animals, including a large cage of monkeys, three camels, two sacred cows (zebus), a llama and three black goats. Si Rubens, secretary, had a new trailer office and ticket wagon.

Following Newton on April 16, one day had been cut due to the delay in opening, the show was in McPherson on the 17th and then played two days in Salina. The show stayed in Kansas through May 5 at St. Francis.

On May 6 the show was in Benkleman, Nebraska. Art Stensvad visited the show in Benkleman and compiled an inventory of the show as follows.

#### LIVE STOCK

Seven horses, one mule, six ponies, one

Horses and their vehicle on a Bud Anderson Circus lot during the 1945 season. Fleming photo.





Anderson monkey cage no. 24 with ponies in front. Benkleman, Nebraska, May 6, 1945. Joe Fleming photo.

elephant, four camels, one llama, two zebras, two goats, one cage of monkeys in side show, four cages in pit show exhibited monkey and baby, two monkeys, two Guadacanal rats and two monkeys.

#### VEHICLES

#27 Semi-trailer, ticket and office wagon.  
#52 Straight bed, Side show canvas and poles.

- #24 Straight bed, monkey cage.
- #12 Semi-trailer, camels and lead stock.
- #16 Semi-trailer, horses.
- #- Straight bed, concessions.
- #- Straight bed, sleeper.
- #- Straight bed, concessions.
- #8 Straight bed, concessions.
- #10 Straight bed, big top canvas.
- #41 Straight bed, seats.
- #6 Semi-trailer, seat planks and jacks.
- #20 Straight bed, bible backs.
- #- Auto trailer, house car.
- #- Semi-trailer, elephant.
- #- Straight bed, house car.
- #- Straight bed, house car.
- #- Over cab truck, house car.

Seat truck no. 41 on the Anderson lot in Benkleman, Nebraska in 1945. Pfening Archives.

- #- Auto trailer, house car.
- #- Auto trailer, house car.
- #17 Semi-trailer, light plant.
- #- Straight bed, band stand and air calliope.
- #- Two wheeled trailer, tires.
- #- Auto trailer, house car.
- #- Auto trailer, Bud Anderson.
- #- Straight bed, novelty truck.

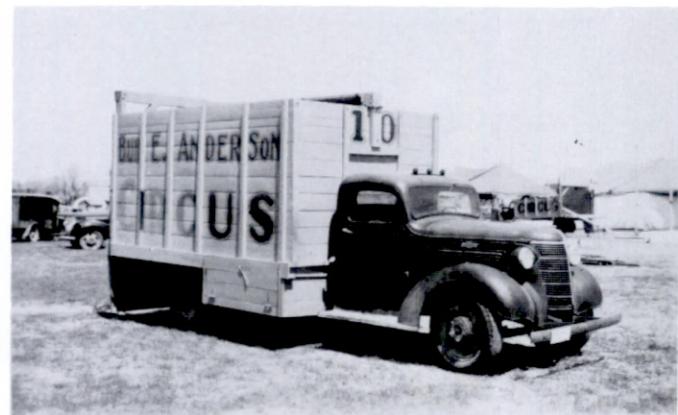
Total of thirty vehicles on the lot. Several other auto trailers were in the neighboring lot, but were not counted.

#### CANVAS

Big top, 80 foot round top with three 30s.  
Side show 30 foot round top with six 10 foot middles.

Joe Fleming also visited the show in Benkleman. He recalls his visit to the show: "It was on a Sunday and only one performance was scheduled, a matinee at 3 p.m. The end of the war in Europe was expected any minute and I remarked on the way to Benkleman that it would be a joke on us if the war ended today and there would be no show when we got there. [The war did end in Europe the very next day.]

"I had visited Bud Anderson owned circuses several times in the past and they always had neat equipment and a good performance. The 1945 show was no exception.



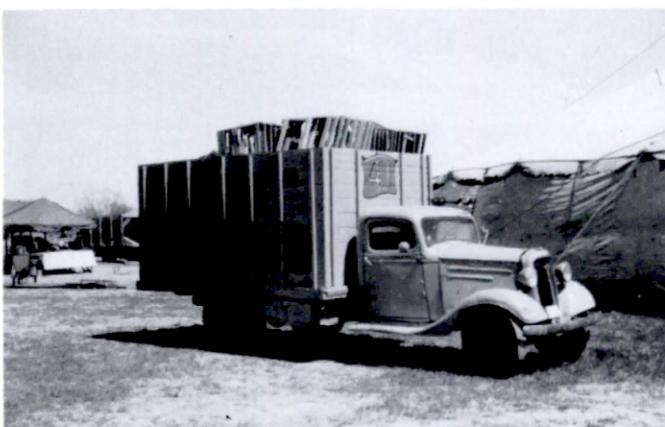
Anderson truck no. 10 carried the big top canvas in 1945. Pfening Archives.

The entire circus looked good on the lot, the big top, side show and trucks were all first class, painted yellow with the title in red. Bud Anderson was always a friendly circus owner.

"Some of the performers I remember were Chief Keys and wife with knife throwing, sharp shooting and fancy roping, and the Frazier family, including Johnnie and Mary [Rawls] who were youngsters at the time. The liberty horse act was worked by Bud Anderson. There was only one elephant, a rather small one named Susie-Q. The band, led by A. Lee Hinckley, was small but played pure circus music and was good. Lee played trumpet and also there were two cornets, trap drummer, bass horn, and air calliope.

"The big top was an 80 foot round with three 30s. Seating inside the top consisted of blues and some bible backs. The main side show tent was khaki colored, a 50 by 80 and had a nice banner line. Inside were six hay eaters; three zebras, one llama and two black sheep. There was also a camel and a dromedary, a cage truck of monkeys, six Shetland ponies, one midget mouse colored mule, four

The bibleback seats were hauled in truck no. 20. Pfening Archives.





The office and ticket wagon no. 27 had decorated and titled in 1944. Pfening Archives.

black and white spotted liberty horses, one cream colored and one white menage horse and a sorrel horse that a cowboy sat on as he played a guitar and sang a song during the performance in the big top.

"The pit show contained the two humped mother and her baby. The camel had been purchased from Terrell Jacobs. There was also a box cage of mother and baby monkeys, a pair of giant rats from Guadulahara and a pair of big monkeys in a box cage, three box cages in all. Happy Loter sold the tickets at twenty cents each.

"In the main side show there was a mind reader, sword walker, torture box, musical bottles act, Punch and Judy, electric guitar (table type) played beautifully by Marie Loter and a magician. In the annex was a half-man-half woman attraction.

"The baby camel had been born a few weeks earlier on Easter Sunday and was named Easter. She was accidentally killed in mid-summer.

"The morning before the performance Bud Anderson was taking us around the lot showing and telling us things and when we got back to the horses tied along side their truck by the side show I was going to take a picture of them from their hind side and they were not standing in an even line, so Bud spoke to them and they lined up for my picture.

"The office truck was painted white and

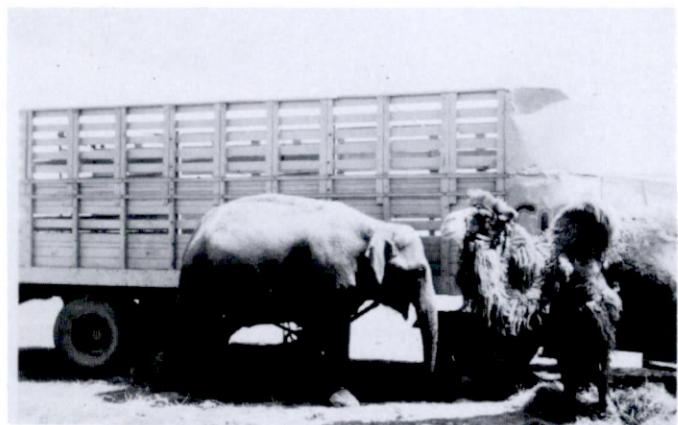
trimmed in red and blue and was a very pretty vehicle.

"That day in Benkleman had been very hot but later in the afternoon it clouded up and began to rain before they had taken down the canvas after the performance. After the show I had a long talk with the band leader A. Lee Hinckley. Unfortunately, I was feeling bad before the show was over, and got worst as the afternoon went on. By the time we left the lot I was one sick Indian and my wife had to drive us back to Trenton."

Photos show that truck no. 10 which loaded the big top canvas had a large frame built on it to facilitate the loading and unloading of bags of canvas. A goodly number of ring stock appear in the photos and the menagerie was corralled. Cage truck no. 24 housed the show's zebras and many readers will recall this cage as later being on the Floyd King version of King Bros. Circus.

Returning to the show's route in Colorado it was at Longmont on May 15 and Fort Collins the next day. On May 17 the show moved into Wyoming for a single stand at Cheyenne, then went back immediately into Nebraska at Kimball. It was at Sidney on the 19th and Scottsbluff on the 22nd, which was the last date in Nebraska for the season. The route then took the show back to Wyoming for a stand at Torrington on May 23 and Wheatland the following day. Nine more

The Bud Anderson Great American Victory Circus on the Benkleman, Nebraska lot in 1945. Pfening Archives.



Suzie-Q, the elephant Bud Anderson leased, on a 1945 lot. Pfening Archives.

stands were played in Wyoming with the last in Lowell on June 2.

The May 26 *Billboard* carried a fine review of the show with the headline "Colorado smiles on Bud E. Anderson." The story said that Anderson had moved into Colorado and at Brush on May 10 and found its first perfect weather of the season. Business was corresponding good. The current staff was listed with Bud Anderson, owner; Joe B. Webb, manager; Si Rubens, secretary; Dorothy Anderson, treasurer and reserves; Harry Fitch, legal adjuster; Edyth Kinsky, front door, assisted by Jack Malone; Cal Hix, equestrian director and banners; A. Lee Hinckley, band leader; Joe Applegate, boss canvas man with Arch (Pappy) Johnston, assistant; J. S. Jones, electrician; Slim Cohn, boss props and Jimmie Goodwin, purchasing agent. The review noted that Jack McClair had the pit show with a baby camel and monkeys.

The main side show line up had Leon Bennett, manager, magic and vent; Jack McCrary and Bill Swope, tickets; Mrs. Harry Fitch, front door; Master Charles, sword ladder; Mrs. Fuller, novelty music; Miss Boneta, sword box; Cleo Bennett, mentalist; Tom Ward, fire eater and sword swallower and Del-Lean, annex.

The big show program was as follows.

1. Grand entry.
2. Eight pony drill.
3. Fraziers, two wire acts.
4. DeKohl Trio, jugglers.
5. Misses Bonnie, Ruby and Margaret, aerial ballet.
6. Barnyard fun, clowns.
7. Wire walking dogs.
8. Frazier's table rock.
9. Concert announcement.
10. Bud Anderson and horse, Tumbleweed.
11. Trapeze, Margaret Wilkins.
12. Clowns.
13. Bud Anderson's eight liberty horses.





Marquee and front door on the Anderson lot in Benkleman in 1945. Pfening Archives.

14. Clowns.
15. Frazella's carrying perch.
16. Concert announcement, introducing Anderson's Arabian stallion, Tonto.
17. Virginia Lynne, table balancing.
18. Bobbie Fuller and Florine Wilkins, contortion.
19. Elephant, Susie-Q, worked by Marion Jordan.

The elephant was still leased from W. C. Richards, however there was no mention during the season whether or not Franco Richards was on the show.

From Wyoming the show moved into Montana at Laurel on June 3 and remained in that state for thirteen stands before going into Idaho on June 16 at Dubois.

The show continued to advertise in the *Billboard* well into the season, wanting both workingmen and performers. One ad in June said the Bud Anderson Circus could use an A-1 mechanic, at top pay, also A-1 cornet and other instruments for the band, at \$50.00 week. In a late June advertisement it wanted to hear from a good family act or two and other acts to strengthen and enlarge the show. It continued to look for musicians,

Light plant semi no. 17 was built for the 1945 season. Pfening Archives.

saying the band was to be enlarged to ten pieces.

A total of thirteen stands were played in Idaho, including Pocatello on June 28. The July 7 *Billboard* said that Bud Anderson had been doing good business in Montana and Idaho despite poor weather, according to reports sent in by Si Rubens. In Montana the show ran into opposition from Bell Bros. Circus. The Bell show was headed into the Dakotas when the two shows found themselves in competition for several stands while Bud Anderson stayed in Montana. Anderson played to two straw houses despite a snow storm in Anaconda on June 13. Poor weather was the rule in Livingston, Bozeman and Helena but the elements failed to hold back the crowds. In Helena on June 11 Leon Bennett had record side show attendance with more than 3,500 passing through the gate. Happy Loters pit show had been showing to an average 1,000 people a day.

Bell Bros. Circus, owned by Tom Ewalt, was one of several shows which played Montana during the season. The *Billboard* noted that at one stand Bud's son Norman paid a visit to the Bell Bros. lot. Arthur Bros. Railroad Circus was also in Montana about the same time and that show reported it had encountered some rough opposition through much of the season. There were so many circuses on the road in 1945 they were bound to get in each others' way. Circus Solly writing in the *Billboard* Under the Marquee column



Horse and stock semi on the Benkleman, Nebraska lot. Joe Fleming photo.

quipped; "If circuses continue to increase in number, they'll be like carnival midways, with one waiting for the other to move off a lot." Another *Billboard* scribe counted twenty-nine circuses on tour as of July 1945, more than the nineteen on the road in July 1920, a flush year after World War I. At one time during the 1945 season there seven circuses in Iowa at the same time. The scribe observed; "Why cry about the Good Ole Days--they can't compare to right now."

The large number of circuses combined with the limited number of people to do the work and put on a performance was a real problem during the 1945 season. All shows were plagued with continual personnel changes. Every issue of the *Billboard* carried numerous advertisements of circuses, all of them wanting people.

One of many such ads appearing in the July 28 *Billboard* was this one: "Bud E. Anderson's Circus can use. A side show manager due to illness of ours. Also need ticket seller and other useful circus people. Can use one more cornet played to bring band to 10. Answer, as per route." The Anderson show was in Utah for twenty-two stands begin-

Anderson semi no. 6 carried seat planks and jacks in 1945. Pfening Archives.



ning at Logan on June 30. On July 25 the show was in Vernal, Utah before going into Colorado at Craig the next day. Seven stands were played in Colorado before going back to Utah to pick up three more towns.

The seventeenth week of the Anderson season started in Dove Creek, Colorado on August 5. Cutting quickly though that state the show was in Aztec, New Mexico by August 8.

There was little news in the trade publication concerning the activities of the American Victory Circus while it was in western territory. It was noted that the show was at Fillmore, Utah on July 12 playing under the auspices of the American Legion and had full houses at night but only a half house for the matinee. Attendance at Parowan, Utah the next day was estimated at more than 1,000 at the evening performance. The matinee that day had been cancelled for unknown reasons. On July 16 at Richfield, Utah there was a full house for the afternoon show and at night the crowd was so great some of them were seated on the straw. There was an unfortunate incident in the menagerie there as the show's baby camel was accidentally killed by its mother.

At the August 10 stand in Gallup, New Mexico the *Billboard* reported that Bud Anderson had really hit the jackpot as the show played to two overflow houses. The *Gallup Independent* gave the show excellent advance publicity.

The show was in New Mexico for twenty-five stands from August 8 to September 2. While in the state the long awaited good news came that World War II was over. Japan surrendered on August 15--VJ day. It was the last of a number of truly historical dates which came during the 1945 circus season. President Roosevelt had died, the war had ended in Europe and in Japan days after the first atom bomb had been dropped.

Although some wartime restrictions ended on VJ Day it would be months before normal conditions would return and personnel shortages would go on for another season or

The Anderson American Victory Circus big top on the lot in Benkelman, Nebraska. Pfening Archives.

two. The end to gasoline, tire and rationing was an immediate blessing to motorized circus operators.

The last stand in New Mexico was on September 2 in Clayton. Moving eastward the show went into Oklahoma at Guymon on September 3.

The show advertised in the August 28 *Billboard* that it could place side show acts, ticket sellers, a front door man and a few acts and clowns for the big top to strengthen the show. The ad stated they were going south for a long season. From this ad it would appear the show planned a tour lasting well into the fall but for some unknown reason the tour was cut short after nine Oklahoma stands. The closing stand was in Mangum, Oklahoma on September 11. Dates in four more Oklahoma towns were published in the *Billboard*. The show did not fulfill its contracted route, as had been the case in 1944. The 1945 season was about six weeks shorter than in 1944.

There were no more news items of the show in the trade publication until an ad appeared in the September 29 *Billboard*. The ad which gave a full description of the show properties is the type circus historians love to find while doing research. It read: "Bud E. Anderson Circus equipment, all or in part for sale for cash. 14 trucks with circus bodies, complete light plants in semi prop truck, 3 motors and generators. Canvas, seats, chairs, bibles; also halter broke animals; 2 zebras, 2 camels, 1 llama, 2 caracals; 20 Rhesus monkeys, all sizes, one mother and 3 month baby; 1 spider monkey; 2 coypu rats; 1 porcupine; 6 liberty horses; 6 pony drill and manage horses. Everything needed for 3 ring circus. Saddles, trappings, harness. All can be seen at Emporia, Kansas. Write or wire your needs."

The same ad appeared again in the next issue. Two weeks later the October 20 issue carried a story reporting that Bud E. Anderson, 51, and in the circus business for 30 years had decided to call it quits as far as the Bud E. Anderson Circus was concerned and had disposed of most of his equipment. The article pointed out that this did not mean Anderson would be out of show business. He

planned to do some stock raising and play indoor circuses and fairs and do some rodeo business. In a letter to the *Billboard* Anderson wrote; "I've sold all of my animals except six ponies. The menage horses and animals were sold to Lee Bible and L. D. (Doc) Hall; the liberty horses went to Bob Stevens of Bailey Bros. In addition I sold two trucks and numerous small articles.

"We have bought ten acres of land two miles west of Emporia, Kansas on Highway 50, with a house and three fine barns and a 1,100 acre grass ranch. I have two registered quarter studs and one white Arabian stud. My plan is to raise some fine horses and white faced calves. I plan to get the eight sorrel colts I own and bring them here and start training them in a new liberty act.

"Mrs. Anderson has bought new furniture for the house and we are both happy as a couple of kids. Many people thought I had a partner in the circus business but that was not so. My office man, Si Rubens, worked on percentage with me.

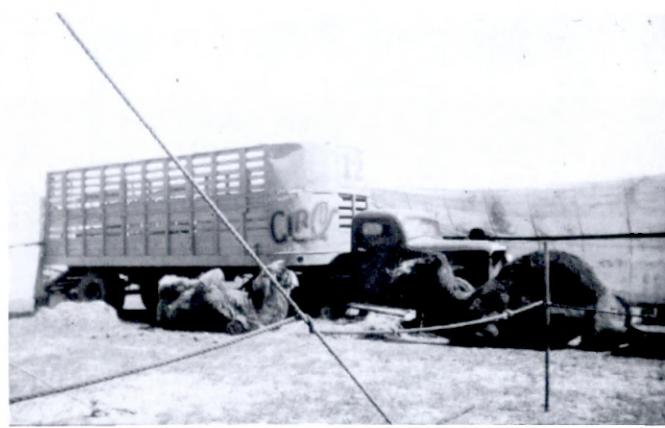
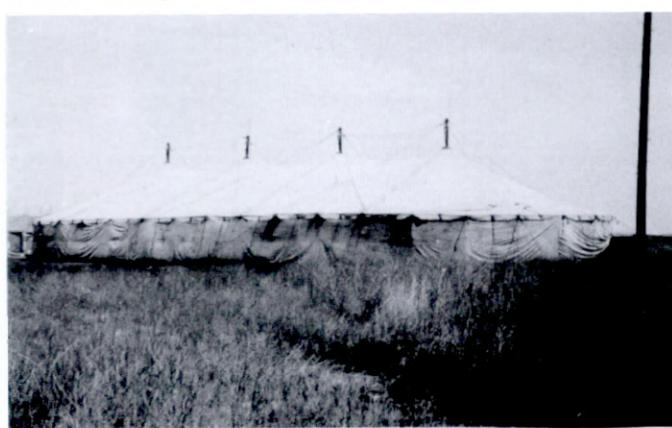
"I've already had my hand in show business since quitting as a circus. I helped put on a rodeo here the other night."

Two observations about the letter should be made. In all probability L. D. Hall who bought either manage horses or other animals, was acting as an agent for Floyd King since King's new circus role had not as yet been made known. Also Si Rubens teamed up with western movie star Buck Owens in framing the Buck Owens Circus, a medium size motorized show for the 1946 season. In 1947 the title was changed to Rogers Bros. This show was operated by Rubens for the next seven seasons.

The Bud Anderson property was not the only show advertised for sale in October 1945. Also advertised was the motorized equipment of the Clyde Beatty Circus, which included a big top, 110 with three 40s; menagerie top, 60 with four 30s and side show top, 50 with three 20s. Beatty going to railroad operation in 1946.

In early November it was announced that Floyd King and his equal partner, Harold

Anderson semi no. 12 carried camels and lead stock. Joe Fleming photo.

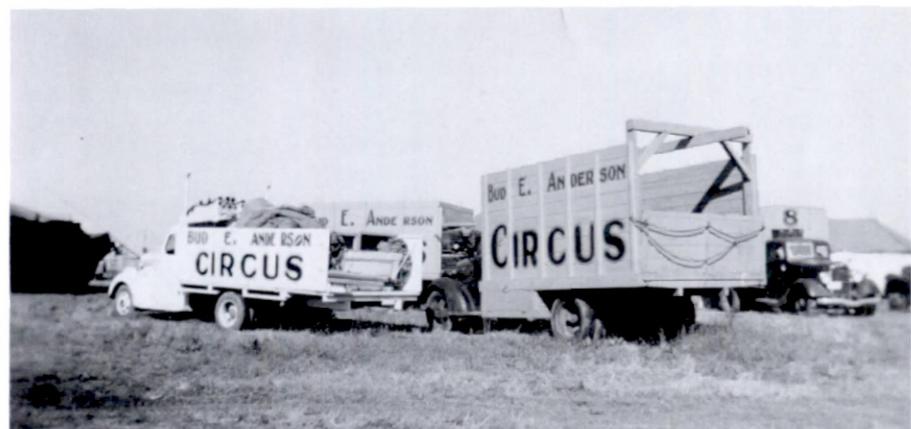


Rumbaugh had bought the Bud Anderson property. According to a *Billboard* story they bought the complete circus as it operated, except the liberty act and some animals previously sold. The Anderson show had been transported on seventeen trucks and was considered a well equipped motorized show.

Floyd King, a well known circus personality, had operated a wild life exhibit the prior few seasons. Harold Rumbaugh was from Everett, Washington. He was a prominent circus fan and owned the Fox Theater in Everett. At first it was said that the duo would establish winter quarters in Emporia, but later it was announced they would frame their new show at the fairgrounds in Hartford, Kentucky. The title was to be King Bros. Circus. A note in the *Billboard* in mid November quoted Floyd King saying the reason they had decided to place the quarters in Hartford rather than Emporia was that they needed the larger facilities at the fairgrounds and also to escape the vigorous Kansas weather in favor of a mild climate where an earlier opening was insured.

L. D. Hall supervised the movement of the trucks to Hartford, which was located twenty miles south of Owensboro, Kentucky.

The Bud E. Anderson Circus concession truck no. 8 in Benkleman, Nebraska. Pfening Archives.



Two Bud E. Anderson American Victory Circus trucks on the lot in Great Bend, Kansas in 1945. On right is the canvas truck with loading rail. Pfening Archives.

King said shops would open December 1 and the work of framing the new show would begin.

King and Rumbaugh later purchased much of the Clyde Beatty equipment which was added to that purchased from Anderson. As a result the new 1946 King Bros. Circus was considerably larger than the 1945 Bud Anderson show.

As for Anderson, he followed his usual pattern by being out of circus business for two seasons, then getting back into it.

In 1948 he framed a new eight truck show called Seal Bros., a title he also used from 1932 to 1937. This was the final circus he built and operated. This Seal Bros. Circus also toured in 1949 and 1950. On June 14, 1950 Bud E. Anderson was killed in a tragic truck accident in Miles City, Montana. Anderson was driving the Seal Bros. horse semi when it rolled over on Montana highway 212.

The 1950 Seal Bros. Circus equipment later went into the 1951 Wallace & Clark Circus owned by Anderson's son Norman.

Anderson truck no. 52 carried the side show equipment and canvas during the 1945 season. Pfening Archives.



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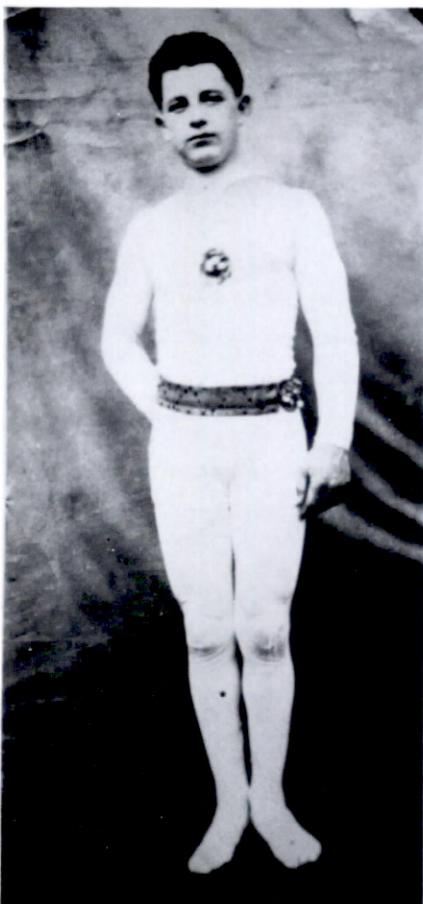
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# THE FLYING RETURN ACTS OF BERT DOSS AND HAROLD VOISE The Flying Thrillers BY STEVE GOSSARD

After the devastating Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus train wreck of 1918 in which Eddie Ward's sister Jennie was killed, Eddie began to put his shattered life back together. Alec Todd, and Billie and Myrtle Summers had left the troupe. Even then the accident was seen as a turning point in the lives of the Flying Wards. People began to refer to the performers with the act as it appeared before the wreck as the "original Flying Wards" in contrast to the flying act as it was presented thereafter. Of the "originals" Eddie still had two of the most outstanding flyers in the country: his wife, Mayme, and Ernie Lane. Eddie had also been working with a talented 17 year-old artist named Delbert (Bert) Doss. Bert had

Harold Voise in 1925 after he joined the Flying Wards in Bloomington, Illinois. Buster Melzora collection.



been spending time at the Ward barn on Emerson Street in Bloomington, Illinois doing small chores for Eddie since the construction of the barn in 1915 or 1916. Bert was with the Ward troupe playing parks and fairs in 1919 and 1920; and he, Eddie, and Ernie also toured the vaudeville circuit with a stage act as well.

Buster Melzora recalls that Bert once visited the Flying Melzoras in Saginaw, Michigan for a few days, investigating the possibilities of leaving the Wards to join the Melzora troupe. Saginaw and Bloomington could be considered sister cities, so far as circus history is concerned as aerial acts from Saginaw extend at least as far back as from Bloomingtons. Over the years many performers switched back and forth between the flying acts of the two cities. It could be that Doss was unhappy with the prospect of working under the shadow of such a sensational flyer as Ernie Lane indefinitely. John (Pa) Melzora could not use the extra flyer at the time, and Doss returned to the Wards.

By 1921 Eddie had recruited a number of new people with the act and they began touring with the major circuses of the American Circus Corporation once again. Doss continued to work with the Ward troupe through the 1920s as Eddie expanded the company of performers under his direction to unprecedented proportions. Among the new recruits was a young flyer named Harold Voise. Voise had lived next door to the Flying Melzoras in Saginaw, and the Voises had practiced their aerial bar act at the Melzoras' training barn. In 1922 Harold had joined the Flying Melzoras at age 14. Buster Melzora states that Harold's father drew up a contract with Eddie Ward in 1924 for young Harold to work for five years as a member of the Flying Wards in exchange for Eddie's influence in obtaining a position for the Voise bar act with one of the American Circus Corporation Shows. Harold Voise and his brothers, Jack and George, remained close friends with the Melzora family over the years.

Buster recalls that Voise was something like a legend in his neighborhood as a young lad. He was an exceptional all around athlete, an outstanding skater, tumbler, leaper, and "good with his fists." Voise was a fearless fighter capable of taking on neighborhood bullies much larger than himself.

Voise began working with the Wards for \$5 per week with a yearly increase of \$5 per week thereafter. When Harold joined the Wards they called him a "sidewinder" because the Melzora flyers turned the opposite direction when they returned from the catcher to the flybar after making their leap. The Wards found it necessary to break him of this habit because it was inconsistent with the rest of the performance.<sup>1</sup>

## THE FLYING THRILLERS

In 1927 Doss formed his own troupe. With his tenure with the Ward troupe completed Harold Voise was free to join Bert's act, and they recruited Bob Brooks, another of Eddie's Ward's students (originally from Los Angeles) as their catcher. Doss was to be the principal flyer with the troupe. Buster Melzora describes Bert as a "picture-book flyer" whose style was exemplary. At that, he had just a little better than young Voise, who was just then maturing into one of the finest flyers in the country. This same year

The Flying Thrillers, Harold Voise, Bert Doss and Bob Brooks in 1928. They were the second act on Sells-Floto. Pfening Archives.



Bert married Agnes Marine, a single trapeze and web performer who had come to Bloomington to join the Wards in 1924 or 1925. Agnes' specialty was a trick called "muscle grinds," performed by sliding down over the trapeze bar so that the bar hooked into the crooks of the arms behind the back. In this position the aerialist revolved over the bar head over heels. Agnes generally performed her single routine on the same bill with Bert's flying act. Agnes' sister, Ethel Hamilton, was also an outstanding aerialist, and in later years she worked with various partners calling the act the "D'Arcy Girls" or the "Hamilton Sisters."

Doss and Voise called their newly formed act the "Flying Thrillers" and they worked through the 1927 and 1928 seasons playing parks and fairs for the Barnes-Carruthers booking agency before touring the winter months for the Western Vaudeville Managers' Association. At that time they were planning to winter in Chicago if they could not secure a practice site in Bloomington.<sup>2</sup>

Eddie Ward might have been instrumental in securing a position for them with the Sells-Floto show in 1929. They opened with the show at the Coliseum in Chicago along with the Nine Flying Wards and the Clarkonians and toured with them that season in display 22 of the program.

The Thrillers were again featured with the Sells-Floto Circus in 1930 along with Mayme Ward's two seven person flying acts. Understandably enough, the Wards' flying acts were having difficulty, since this was the year following Eddie's death. *Billboard's* review of the show stated that the Wards were "not . . . up to the old standard apparently." By contrast the "Three Thrillers, working in the center, are doing superb work, their difficult somersaults and twists being accomplished with a grace and apparent ease that is marvelous." Far from being an insult to the Flying Wards, these remarks illustrate that the Thrillers' training under the Wards had paid off, and this is an indication that Eddie Ward and John Melzora both had been instrumental in developing the flying return act into a fine art form.<sup>3</sup>

This was also the first year for the Flying Concellos troupe on the Robbins Bros. Circus, later replacing the Thrillers on the Sells-Floto show. The Concellos would work together with Doss and Voise on many future occasions. In June the Thrillers left the Sells-Floto show to work the fair circuit. A photograph of Agnes Doss and her sister, Ethel, was featured in *Billboard* on August 9 appearing together in their D'Arcy Girls act, which was then under contract with Ethel's husband, Leo. The D'Arcy Girls had suffered an accident at Michigan City, Indiana which

left Ethel in a body cast. Both girls sustained back injuries.<sup>4</sup> *Billboard* reported on October 18 that the Thrillers would winter in Los Angeles, California.

The Flying Thrillers worked the Knights of Columbus Circus in Dayton, Ohio early in 1931 and Agnes did her single routines for the Twin Cities Shrine show in March. The "Three Thrillers" were in Display 22 of the opening of the Sells-Floto show that year along with the Concellos and the Clarkoni-

act. Later in the season Doss called the act the "Flying Bertons," and the fact that Voise and Doss both continued to use the name "Flying Thrillers" from time to time without fear of complaint from the other is an indication that the split was made without animosity. George Voise stayed with the Sells-Floto Circus working as a clown that year.<sup>6</sup>

From this point on the careers of those associated with the Flying Thrillers troupes will be considered separately. Since Doss

had entered the picture earlier and retired from show business some twenty years before Harold Voise the Flying Bertons will be considered first.

#### THE FLYING BERTONS

In May of 1932 Agnes Doss received special mention with Sells-Floto for her "one arm revolves," and her daughter, Ethel, celebrated her fourth birthday April 24th when the show opened at the Chicago

Coliseum. Agnes performed with the Flying Bertons as well as doing her single acts, and Bert recruited Eddie Ward Jr. as his catcher with Sells-Floto that year in Display 19. On July 4th Bert served as master of ceremonies for a performance of the Sells-Floto Kinker's Club. Agnes was not mentioned again doing one arm swings with Sells-Floto that year. This was not her specialty. She was a feature of Display 6 of the program doing a single trapeze routine. Her photo was featured in *Billboard* August 6 with Miss Violetta, and again December 17. In December Agnes was hospitalized in Bloomington for an appendicitis operation.<sup>7</sup>

In the May issue of *White Tops* an article by C. G. Sturtevant appeared entitled "The Flying Act and Its Technique." This article was accompanied by illustrations drawn by Bert Doss, describing the execution of eight fundamental tricks from the flybar to the catcher. From the general character of the article it is apparent that the author thought the Flying Thrillers were one of the foremost flying acts in the business, Sturtevant specifically named several of Eddie Ward's former students as well as the Flying Wards troupe among his personal favorites. It is worth mentioning that Doss' simple drawings were surprisingly sophisticated in their description.

The Flying Bertons began playing indoor dates through the winter of 1932-1933 with the same troupe: Bert, Agnes, and Eddie Ward Jr. Their photo was featured in *Billboard* on March 4. They played the Old



Agnes Doss doing a single trapeze act on Sells-Floto in 1930. Pfening Archives.

Time Yankee Circus in Chicago December 16-17, 1932 and followed with H. C. Ingram's Old Time Dixie Circus in Memphis. They added a young flyer named Wayne Larey before the Memphis date. Larey had broken in with the Flying Wards in 1928. In 1937 he would become one of the elite group of flyers who were able to accomplish a consistent triple somersault to a hand catch. Wayne is known to former professionals as one of the classiest flyers to ever swing off the pedestal board. He later

formed his own troupe, the Flying Comets (later called the Flying Covets) along with Paul Thorpe and Carl Lasiter. The Comets performed on the Ringling show from 1936 to 1940, when Wayne and his catcher, Art Brown and another flyer went to Australia and took a position with Wirth Bros. Circus calling themselves the Flying Waynes. When shoulder injuries made it impossible for Wayne to work with the flying act anymore he took a position as General Manager for Wirth Bros. and remained in Australia for 21 years.<sup>8</sup>

On April 29, 1933 Alfredo Codona was severely injured at Madison Square Garden performing with the opening of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus. It was hoped for a time that Codona would make a comeback, and it was necessary to find a temporary replacement for the principal flyer with the Codonas. The fact is seldom mentioned that Bert Doss was Codona's first replacement, although it is generally known that Clayton Behee took over this position with the Codonas after 1933. The Flying Bertons disbanded during the 1933 season and Bert went on the Ringling show with the Codonas. Buster Melzora recalls watching Bert at practice with the Codonas. Doss was used to a "shorter" flybar (shorter cables) and his timing was off because the arc of his swing was greater. He struck his head repeatedly when returning to the flybar before they were able to get the act into shape. Agnes toured with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus that season doing her solo routines in Display 8, and her daughter, Ethel, visited her on the show in September. Agnes was included in the aerial display of the United Indoor Circus doing muscle grinds in October.<sup>9</sup> *Billboard* magazine stated November 4 that Wayne Larey was hospitalized in Bloomington for an operation.

When Bert put the flying act back together in 1934 he recruited Eldred (Red) Sleeter as his catcher and Red's wife, Mitzie, as his



The Ringling-Barnum flying acts in 1932. Left to right Roy Deisler, Harold and Eileen Voise, Art and Antoninette Concello, George Valentine, Luca Leers, Lalo Codona, Vera Bruce, Alfred Codona, Tamara and Albert Powell. Lorraine Valentine collection.

other flyer. Agnes, no doubt, preferred to concentrate on her solo routines. She was never known as an outstanding flyer. Agnes was featured with the other aerial acts at the Detroit shrine show February 17. The Bertons played the Minneapolis shrine show

Lalo Codona, Vera Bruce and Bert Doss in the back yard of the Ringling-Barnum show in 1933. Doss joined the show early in the season after Alfredo Codona hurt his shoulder. Pfening Archives.



along with the Flying Concellos later that month, and Agnes and her sister, Ethel, were both performing with the same show. Bert's troupe was called the "Thrillers" for the rest of the year playing the El Jebel Shrine Circus in Denver in April, and joining the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in April or May to work along with the Codonas and the Flying Hills. Though he was not yet aware that his flying days were over for good, Alfredo Codona was ap-

pointed equestrian director with the Hagenbeck-Wallace show later that season. In September Agnes had to leave the show due to illness.<sup>10</sup>

Red Sleeter had been a physical education director at the Y.M.C.A. in Bloomington in the early 1920s. He was the first to introduce a number of "west side boys," including Harold Genders and Wayne Larey, to gymnastic work. Apparently self-taught, Red developed and outstanding slack wire routine which he presented at the annual Y.M.C.A. Circus in Bloomington for several years. He had ample opportunity to practice with the professional flying acts which practiced at the "Y" each winter and by 1927 he was working as the catcher for Paul and Nellie Sullivan's troupe, the Flying Sullivans. Red later toured with one of Art Concello's troupes which went to Australia several times beginning in 1936. He later married one of the daughters of the Wirth circus family and spent the remainder of his life in Australia. Red's wife in 1934 was Mitzie Moore, of the talented Moore family of acrobats from Peru, Indiana. Her sister, Gracie, was married to Harold (Tuffy) Genders, and her other sister, Eva Mae, was Mrs. Emmett Kelley. Mitzie and Gracie had joined the Ward troupe after Eddie died in 1930. In later years Mitzie was married to Murry Fein, a concessions man. Red and Mitzie's daughter, Jeannie Sleeter, later worked with Art Concello's troupes.

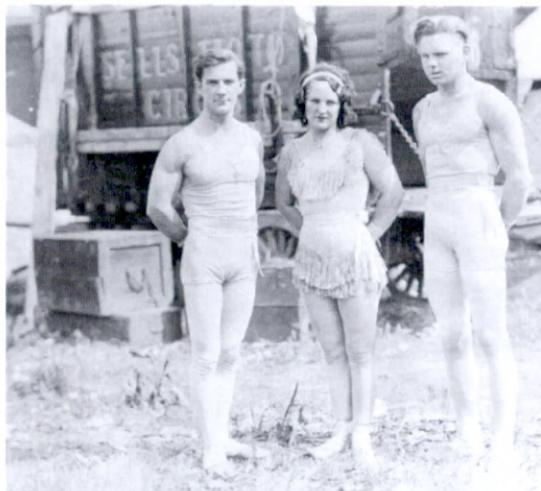
Bert added two people to his troupe to make a five person flying act playing the Grand Rapids Shrine show in January. Agnes performed in the flying act with the Y.M.C.A. Circus in Bloomington in March of 1935 along with Harry LaMar and the great single trapeze artist, Frank Shepherd. *Billboard* reported that Bert and Red visited the Polack Bros. show when it played in Peoria in March. The former partners, Doss and Voise, toured the circus season with the Cole Bros. Circus; the Thrillers sharing the bill with the

Harolds, and later in the season also with the Flying Esquedas. A Flying Thrillers photo was featured on the back cover of *White Tops* in the April-May issue. When the Cole show closed in November it was reported that Bert and Agnes would return to Bloomington and the Sleeters would go to Springfield, Illinois.<sup>12</sup>

Bert's flying act played indoor shows through 1936 beginning with the Des Moines, Iowa Union Circus in January. They played the Minneapolis Shrine show in February and the Ar-Sar-Ben Shrine Show in Omaha, Nebraska in March where the troupe was composed of Bert and Agnes, Red and Mitzie Sleeter, and "Jim Ward." Later in 1936 Bert and Gene Enos opened their Circus Nite Club in Bloomington with Agnes working as cashier and Gene's wife, Rose Burke, serving as emcee. This was said to be "one of the largest clubs in the state. The boys have dancing every night and a floor show last half of each week."<sup>13</sup> In years to come Doss entered into various businesses in Bloomington. At one time he owned Circus Park (now called State Farm Park, a recreational facility for employees of the insurance company) where he ran a roller rink and welcomed circus troupes to use the park as a practice site.

The only possible reference to Bert Doss' flying act which this author has found after 1936 was with the program of the Robbins Bros. Circus in *Billboard* of May 7, 1938. A "Flying Thrillers" troupe was listed in Display 20. Since two of Harold Voise's troupes were already working with the Cole Bros. first unit that year there is a possibility that the "Thrillers" act with Robbins Bros. that year was Bert's troupe.

In later years Bert kept an interest in circus life. He was mentioned in *Billboard* of March 2, 1946 as having paid a visit to the Cole Bros. show in Bloomington when the Voise troupe had been playing. That same year Bert and Agnes sold Circus Park and were looking for a location for a new roller rink. In 1950 Bert and Clyde Noble (formerly of the Flying Fishers) were both on the Shrine committee for the Polack Bros. Circus Eastern Unit when it played in Bloomington. With that show the "Seven Flying Wards" were the featured flying act.<sup>14</sup> In July of 1957 Agnes' sister, Ethel died from a fall of 110 feet when the perch pole on which she had been working crystallized and broke at Bellefourche, South Dakota. In 1944 a tragic incident occurred when Bert and Agnes' daughter, Ethel, died of a gunshot wound. Though some controversy surrounded the shooting an inquest determined the 16 year old girl's death suicide. As partial motive for the suicide, it was explained that the young girl had been dissatisfied with her progress in training for circus work. Bert and Agnes were left to



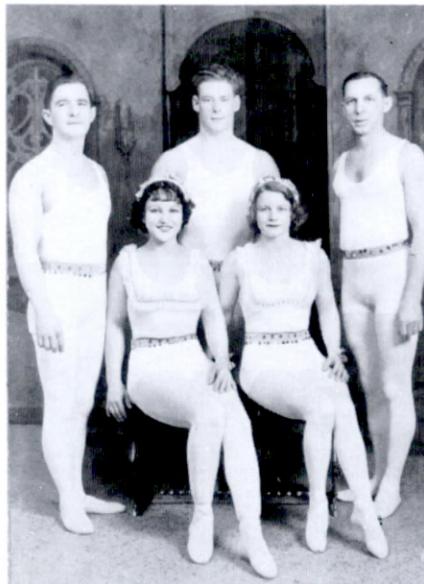
Bert Doss, Mitzi Doss and Eddie Ward, Jr. on Sells-Floto in 1932. Pfening Archives.

their grief. Bert died in Bloomington in June of 1960 and Agnes died ten years later.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE FLYING HAROLDS

As mentioned earlier, the Harolds flying return act was "moved up" to the Ringling show along with the Concellos in 1932 and both troupes appeared in Display 19 along with the great Codona troupe. At this time Harold's mailing address was listed in Saginaw, Michigan and it seems that Harold could easily claim both Saginaw and Bloomington as his home base in those days. An early letterhead for the Flying Harolds gives their address as 801 West Locust St. in Bloomington, which was also Art Concello's

Bert Doss, Red Sleeter, Frank Shepherd, Agnes Doss and Mitzi Sleeter in 1934 at the Century of Progress. Pfening Archives.



address. Voise and Concello remained the best of friends up until Harold's death in 1986.

At this time the Voise troupe consisted of Harold Voise, Mitzie Sleeter, and Roy Deisler. *Billboard* reported that the Harolds were "said to be known also as the Flying Thrillers" and were also using a double trapeze rigging for some of their stunts, an innovation which would take some 55 years to reach maturity.

Deisler was then 25 years old. *Bandwagon* published a detailed account of his outstanding career in an article by Mary K. Hoppe in November-December 1971. Roy had been a member of his cousins Al and Paul Garee's casting act in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Roy was recruited as catcher for the Melzoras along with the Garee brothers in 1920. Deisler left the Melzoras to join Harry LaVan's flying bar act in Bloomington in 1922. In 1925 Roy and Frank Shepherd presented a flying act for the Bob Morton Shrine circus. Later on Roy and Jess Detwiler produced a flying act for Barnes-Carruthers booking agency which they called the Flying Royals. He joined Voise and Doss in 1931. Harold and Roy must have been well acquainted by that time, both having worked with flying acts in Saginaw and Bloomington over the past ten years. In the 1930s, Hoppe tells us, Deisler, Harold Voise, Bert Doss, and Alfredo Codona all served at various times as stand-ins doing stunts for the Johnny Weismuller Tarzan series at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios. In 1944 Roy and his wife, Juanita (Neets), would form their own troupe, the Flying Royals (later called the Flying Deislars).

Eileen Sullivan and her sister, Rose, had come to Bloomington from Holyoke, Massachusetts to train with the Ward troupe in the late 1920s. Eileen had been married to Wayne Larey and the two had worked with one of the Ward troupes on the Al G. Barnes Circus until 1930 or 1931, when they split up. She married Harold Voise in 1932 or 1933 and joined his flying act where she became known as one of the outstanding women flyers in the business. The team of Harold, Eileen, and Roy Deisler worked together for several years.

The winter of 1932-1933 the Flying Harolds worked several indoor dates for Fred Bradna; playing the Bradna and Davenport Demolay Circus at Milwaukee, Wisconsin in January along with the Flying Siegrists in Display 22. They also played the Detroit and Cleveland shrine shows along with the Concellos before opening with Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey with the Concellos and the Codonas. The flying acts were listed in various Ringling programs that year as appearing in Display 20 or 21. As mentioned before, this was the year that Alfredo was replaced by Bert Doss. In the July-August

1933 issue of *White Tops* magazine the Concellos and Harolds together published congratulations to Ringling Bros. Circus for celebrating the Golden Jubilee Anniversary.

In 1934 the Harolds performed at the Detroit Shrine Circus in February along with the Concellos and they followed with the Minneapolis Shrine show along with the Bertons and Concellos. In March they played the Canton, Ohio Shrine date where they were reported by the *Billboard* correspondent to be "one of the best flying acts ever seen here." *Billboard* reported that the Harolds and Concellos were practicing that month at Canton, Ohio, probably at the City Auditorium. Besides being one of the most prominent circus cities in the country, Canton, Ohio was also Charles Seigrist's hometown and the City Auditorium was a favorite practice site of the Siegrists' flying acts.

The Harolds toured with the Ringling show that season in Display 18 or 20 along with the Concellos and the Otaris, a German act with seven men and three women who performed their outstanding "aerial cross" routine. The Ringling show was now missing Codona's sensational triple somersault, and when Art Concello developed this feature into the Flying Concellos' routine he supplanted Codona as the pre-eminent flyer in the world. *Billboard* reported May 5 that Eileen was substituting with the Flying Concellos while Antoinette Concello visited her sister, Mickey King, who had suffered another near-fatal fall while performing with a shrine show in Cincinnati.<sup>16</sup>

*Billboard* reported on January 19, 1935 that the Voise troupe would winter at Canton, Ohio using the City Auditorium as their practice site. The Voices made a change in plans, however. *Billboard* reported Feb. 29: "Art Concello has reopened the gymnasium at Bloomington, Ill., especially equipped for flying acts, which he recently acquired. He has 15 people of his troupes now practicing there, and Harold Voise is also rehearsing two troupes for the next season in the gymnasium."

This was formerly the Ward training barn, and Voise's people joined Concello's flyers to practice at the homestead of the Ward flying clan.

At the Canton, Ohio Shrine show in January of 1935 Eileen and Harold both suffered injuries when the net broke under them. Harold lost two weeks out of the act with torn

shoulder ligaments, and Eileen's broken thumb cost her two or more Shrine dates with the act. Mickey King filled in for Eileen when the Harolds played the Cleveland Grotto Circus and the Detroit Shrine show along with the Randolls and the Siegrists in February for Orrin Davenport. *Billboard* reported on February 9 that the Harolds would not play their date at Grand Rapids but would instead return to Canton, Ohio for more training. Mickey left the troupe after the Detroit show to play her own engagements.

As mentioned before, the Harolds and Bert Doss' Flying Thrillers performed together on the Cole Bros. Clyde Beatty Circus in 1935.



The Flying Harolds on Cole Bros. Circus in 1937. Left to right Roy Diesler, Doris Girtin, Harold Voise, Grace Owens, Jean Evans, George Voise, Eileen Larey, Leck Owens, Neets Diesler and Carl Lasiter. Illinois State University Special Collections.

Francis (Gooch) Reiner, another of Eddie Ward's former students, filled in catching for the Harolds while Roy Diesler was doing stunt work in Hollywood that year. Hoppe notes that while in Hollywood Roy met Wanda Juanita (Neets) Sturgis, a young U.C.L.A. coed. They were married and she began training with the flying act when the troupe returned to practice at the Concello barn in Bloomington. She showed a remarkable aptitude for aerial work and she performed with the Harolds within a surprisingly short time. As Art Concello put it, "That Neets, boy, she could do anything."<sup>17</sup> Could any flyer hope to achieve greater recognition than an endorsement from a flyer of Concello's stature?

Voise was now presenting two flying acts with one or more shows. The troupe in which Harold and Eileen performed was usually called the Flying Harolds and played for many years with the Cole-Beatty Circus on the same program as Harold's bar acts, which were called the "Harolds" and the "Voise

Troupe." Harold's other flying act was usually called the "Flying Thrillers" and in later years Harold's younger brother George was the principal flyer for this troupe. The troupe played along side the Harolds on the Cole show or worked independently with indoor shows or playing parks and fairs.

The winter of 1935-1936 Harold's two troupes were again practicing at Concello's barn on Emerson Street in Bloomington. Harold's three person flying act was featured in Display 24 of the Cole show. When the show played in Bloomington the *Daily Pantagraph* reported on July 5, 1936: 'The Flying Harolds, aerial gymnasts, bowed to their

many friends and acquaintances in the audience as they mounted to the high pedestals. Ten minutes later, having presented a breath taking series of flys and catches Harold Voise, Eileen Larey and Joe Remelette received a great ovation from the audience."

At this time Harold was calling his other troupe the Imperial Illingtons. The article went on to say that the Illingtons "gave a companionate exhibition at the other end of the big top." In the center ring was one of the oldest

and most spectacular aerial displays in the country, the Peerless Potters casting act. *Billboard* reported on July 18 that brother George had broken his right wrist performing a publicity stunt in Cleveland, Ohio. Working conditions during the summer of 1936 were not favorable. *Billboard* reported July 25: "Cole Affected By Heat Spell. Kansas City, Mo. July 18-Indications that Kansas City would give Cole Brothers-Clyde Beatty Circus the largest two-day gross of the season were shattered by the continuous heat spell. The show appeared here on the hottest days in history of the local weather department. . . . The heat spell was first encountered at Dubuque and continued thru Iowa and into Missouri."

In such circumstances the aerial acts got the worst of it. Though the tents were designed to allow for ventilation temperatures in the top of the tent were generally 20-30 degrees higher than those on the ground.<sup>18</sup>

In 1985 this author had access to an unique collection of 8mm films taken by the late Harold Ramage, Bloomington's foremost circus enthusiast from the 1930s through the 1950s, in the Museums Department of Illinois State University. Among the many films of various circus subjects was a short segment entitled "Harold Voise Troupe" featured on Cole Bros. Clyde Beatty Circus

1936-1937." The subtitle went on to name some of the members of the Voise troupe at that time: Bee Star, Eileen Larey, Carl Lasiter, Leck Owens, Neets Deisler, George Voise, and Jack Voise. It is somewhat unusual that Eileen was so often referred to as Eileen Larey for so many years after she had married Harold Voise. Bee Star, who had been a solo performer with Eddie Ward's troupe in the 1920s, hadn't worked for several years before the film was taken and her movements appear a bit stiff in the film as she climbs the web and attempts a series of one arm swings. She may have been filling in with Harold's act for a short time. Others pictured on the film who are not mentioned on the list are probably Grace Owens, Doris Girtin, and Hank Robbins. All scenes were filmed at the Concello training barn in Bloomington. Several of the flyers, including Harold Voise, himself, are pictured practicing with the mechanics belt throwing stunts to the catcher. Not only are Roy Deisler and Harold's brother, Jack Voise, pictured catching, but Neets Deisler is also shown catching from a cradle. The general character of the practice session is light hearted and playful. These unique films, now brittle, deteriorating, and badly in need of restoration, allow the circus historian the opportunity of stepping back into the past for a brief moment to share in the making of circus history.

In 1937 both of Harold Voise's flying acts were performing with the Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus in Display 19, one being called the Harolds and the other called the Imperial Illingtons, along with the Peerless Lelands opening with the show at the New York Hippodrome. The combined personnel of the Voise troupes included Harold and Eileen, Roy and Neets Deisler, Grace and Leck Owens, Jean Evans, Doris Girtin, George Voise, and Carl Lasiter. The *Billboard* Cole Bros. gossip column stated that the Voise troupe had "weathered the heat, dust and grasshoppers" by playing rummy in their spare time.<sup>19</sup>

In 1938 both of Harold's flying acts, the Flying Harolds and the "Voise Flyers," opened with the Cole Bros. Circus in Chicago along with the "Peerless Illingtons" (possibly a third Voise flying act) in Display 27 and Eileen was featured doing a two-and-a-half somersault to a hand catch in the center ring. The "Misses Voise" were also featured on loops in Display 18. The Harolds' flying act was pictured turning a passing leap on the front cover of the October-November issue of *White Tops*.<sup>20</sup>

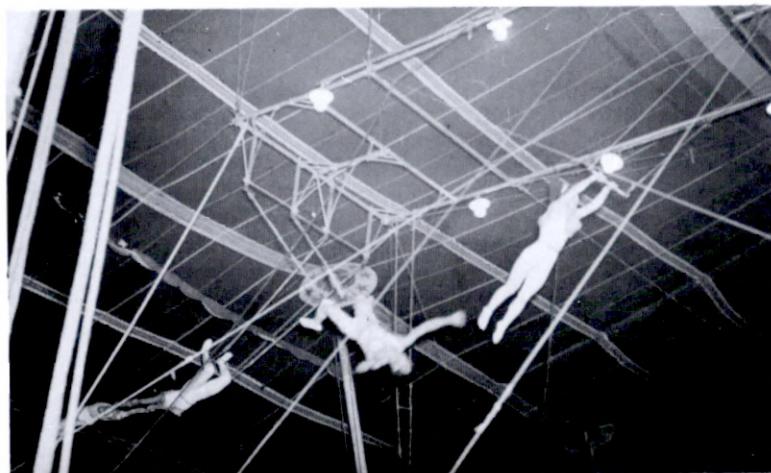


The Harold Voise aerial bar act, Harold Voise, Jack Voise and Firmen Olivia in 1939. Illinois State University Special Collections.

The Robbins Bros. Circus of 1938 was a second unit of the Cole Bros. Circus. Either the Flying Thrillers act with this show was Bert Doss' flying act or Harold Voise had organized yet another troupe for this show. This flying act performed in Display 20 of the program along with Clayton Behee's troupe.<sup>21</sup>

The Voise troupe did not perform with Cole Bros. Circus in 1939. Their activities during this circus season are uncertain but it is likely that they were either playing parks and fairs or touring outside of the country. They were with Orrin Davenport's indoor circus playing the Cleveland Grotto show in

Harold Voise's Flying Thrillers double act on Cole Bros. Circus in 1941. Pfenning Archives.



February and they followed with the Detroit Shrine show along with two of Art Concello's troupes, the Concellos and the Randallos. The Voise troupe presented two bar acts for this show as well, and a Voise bar act was featured with the Walter L. Main Circus at Akron, Ohio in May.<sup>22</sup>

The winter of 1939-1940 Harold was rehearsing an 8 person flying act at Gray's Armory in Cleveland practicing a "criss-cross novelty act" which included Charles Siegrist's son, Joe, and his wife Bebe of the Costello family of circus performers. This routine was obviously inspired by the Otaris troupe of flyers with whom Harold's troupe had worked on the Ringling show several years before. Harold was willing to experiment from time to time including double trapeze, unusual riggings, and other variations. They planned to debut this new act with the Davenport show in the Chicago Stadium in January of 1940 with a troupe of three women and five men. They presented their bar act with the Detroit Shrine Circus February 10 where the "Larey Sisters" were also featured. In April they played the Greater Olympia Circus at the Chicago Stadium along with their aerial bar routine. The Orrin Davenport dates ended with the St. Paul Shrine show April 6. *Billboard* reported on June 1 that Harold's other troupe, composed of his brother, Jack (catching), Santo Glorioso, and Faye Smiletta had played Coney Island, Cincinnati, on May 18 for Hamid Morton. Harold's feature flying act and bar act was playing the Winnipeg, Manitoba shrine show. The Flying Harolds played the Providence shrine show in May with Harry LaMar's troupe and the 5 Eltons. The Eltons were Elden Day's troupe. Elden had broken in with the Flying Wards in 1930.<sup>23</sup>

This was the year, Hoppe tells us, that Roy and Neets Deisler left the Voises to join one of Concello's troupes on the Ringling show. Harold's brother Jack took over as principal catcher for the Voise flying act.

During the winter of 1940-1941 Harold's people were training at Cole Bros. winter quarters at Louisville, Kentucky breaking in an all girl flying act for Orrin Davenport's indoor circus. *Billboard* reported on January 18 that the troupe would go to the Central Armory at Cleveland to continue practice for a five woman flying act which featured Eileen doing a double full twister with Mayme Ward catching for the troupe. At this time the Concellos left Bloomington, Illinois to reside permanently in Sarasota, Florida. Though other troupes were to use the old Ward barn site for practice for a few years thereafter its

usefulness declined and it was no longer a significant training site for aerial acts.

The flying acts were short of personnel during the war years and Harold's all girl flying act enabled the men with the Voise troupe to concentrate on the bar act. Mickey King may have participated in this flying act since she was reportedly with the Davenport show en route to Cleveland as well. The first engagement for this troupe was in Cleveland. The "Voise Trio," aerial bars, were featured in Display 9 or 10 of the Davenport program. Eileen participated in Display 13 or 16 doing cloud swings, and Harold's all girl flyers shared Display 22 or 26 (the program changed during the season) with Clayton Behee's Flying Behees. Eileen's sister, Rose, was Clayton Behee's wife, and she worked both with his flying act and with the Voise troupes for many years. The Voise troupes played the Cleveland Grotto show and the Detroit Shrine Circus in January. *Billboard* reported on February 15 that the "straight man" with the Voise Trio comedy bar act had broken bones in his hand in Cleveland when he missed a trick and fell into the net. At this time the flying act was said to have been made up of four girls and one man who probably took Mayme Ward's place as catcher. The Voises and the Flying Behees were joined at Detroit by Wayne Larey's Flying Comets. The Voise Troupe presented their aerial bars routine for the Rochester Shrine circus and the flying act with this show was called the "Flying Wonders" with three girls and one man (probably the Voise flying act once again). The "6 Flying Thrillers" were featured with the Cole Bros. Circus during the regular tent season along with the Flying Nelsons in Display 30. At the Cole Bros. winter quarters at Louisville, Kentucky in April Eileen Voise and Mayme Ward were interviewed by radio station WINN. Cole Bros. gossip column the June 21 *Billboard* stated that George and Jack Voise were both the "best dressed men in show business." The Voise troupe and Mayme Ward returned to Louisville with the show when it closed in November.<sup>24</sup>

In February of 1942 the Voise flying act played indoor dates for Orrin Davenport once again. They were with the Cleveland Grotto Al Sirat Shrine Circus along with the Siegrists and the Flying Comets. They followed with the Hartford Shrine show exhibiting both the aerial bar act and the Flying Thrillers, and they played the St. Paul Shrine date in March. They were called the Flying Harolds when they played the sixth annual Shrine show in Lansing, Michigan. Both of Voise's bar acts were featured with Cole Bros. during the tenting season in Display 4 and Eileen's blindfolded double somersault

was the featured trick with the Flying Thrillers in Display 29. Harold's brother Jack was inducted into the Armed Forces in July and Bob Porter stepped in as catcher for the flying act.<sup>25</sup>

The Harolds flying act played the Cleveland Shrine Circus again in January of 1943 along with the Behees and the Flying Valen-



Jack Voise, Harold and Eileen Voise, The Flying Thrillers, merited a full page in the 1947 Cole Bros. program.

tines. They were also again featured with Cole Bros. that year, the route book listing Harold, Eileen, Mayme Ward, Bob Porter, and Kay Burslem among the performers. Mayme Ward may not have been working with the flying act that year, however, but may have been in charge of wardrobe department. Both of Harold's bar acts again appeared in Display 4 and the Flying Thrillers in Display 28. The October 23 *Billboard* reported that George Voise had married Gladys Thompson, a dancer with the Cole show. They again returned to Louisville when the show closed. In December Harold Voise's application for military service was rejected. He must have felt at this time that his troupe were good enough to continue without him.<sup>26</sup>

In 1944 the Voises left Louisville January 17 to practice at the Central Auditorium in Cleveland with several new performers. They played the Cleveland Grotto Circus for Orrin Davenport in February presenting both bar acts, and the Flying Harolds appeared along with Roy Deisler's newly-formed

troupe, the Flying Royals. Deisler recruited Buster Melzora as his principal flyer on Ringling that year as part of the show which toured after the disastrous Hartford fire. Harold's bar acts were again featured with the Cole show that year as the third listed display. *Billboard* reported on May 6 that Eileen was doing a blindfolded two-and-a-half somersault as the most outstanding feature of the Flying Thrillers act in Display 26. "Cole Bros. Gossip" in the July 1 *Billboard* commented that brother Jack had been serving in the Pacific for the past two years, and on August 26 it was said that Bob Porter was the "laugh of the week" dressed in his tights loading trunks after the storm in Pueblo Colorado. The flying act at that time was made up of Harold, Eileen, and George Voise; and Joe and Orda Masker; with Bob Porter catching. Joe Masker was the nephew of the great aerial bar performer, Philip Chavette. Chavette was also one of the early pioneers of the flying return act from Saginaw, Michigan. Joe and Odra had also worked with the Flying Wards in the 1920s. The reporter for the Cole show boasted that this team made up one of the best flying acts in the business and Harold was "flying as good as he ever did." Brother Jack visited the Cole show when they played in Phoenix late in the season, and when the show closed the Voises returned to Louisville and Bob Porter left for Los Angeles.<sup>27</sup> Late that year they presented both bar acts and the flying act at the Wichita Shrine

Circus before traveling to Mexico City in January of 1945 with the Grand American Circus. They may have presented only one bar act in Mexico, for the Voises also presented a bar act with the Cleveland Grotto Circus in February, where the flying act was not specifically identified by *Billboard* program of the show. In March Harold presented a bar act in Display 7 of the Minneapolis Shrine show, with the Flying Harolds in Display 25. The "Voise Trio" bar act performed in Display 9 of the St. Paul Shrine date and the Flying Thrillers shared Display 27 with the Flying Concellos. Though Art Concello had retired from aerial work, his wife Antoinette remained with the act for several years.<sup>28</sup>

As usual, the Voises presented both a bar act and a flying act with the opening of the Cole show in Displays 3 and 30 respectively in 1945. A mysterious and light hearted entry in the gossip column of *Billboard* September 15 stated that: "Harold Voise wants it known that he has given up his latest protoge because he breaks all training rules and that's not good for the body beautiful. Dr. Voise is sad about the entire affair."

This author will not speculate on the meaning of this inside joke, but it is evident

that the atmosphere at the Cole show was cheerful and Harold was popular with the other performers. On October 6 the Cole gossip column strung out a long nostalgic list of aerial artists who had broken in with Eddie Ward in the 1920s. What this author would not give to be able to hear the dialogue at the bull session which inspired this outburst of nostalgia. Those unique personal memories are now lost to us forever. When the show closed in October it was reported that Harold and Eileen went to Cleveland.<sup>29</sup>

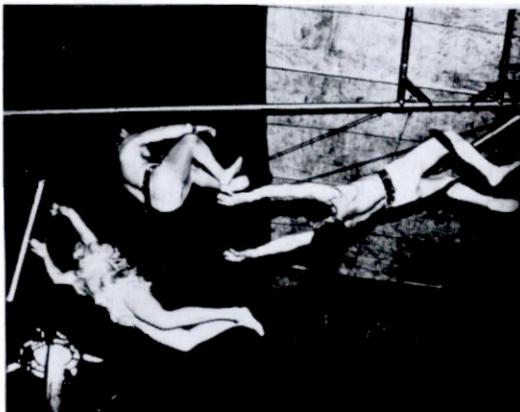
In March of 1946 the Voise troupe presented a bar act and flying act for the Minneapolis Shrine Circus. During the matinee of the April opening of the Cole Bros. show at Louisville Harold Voise was "bruised and shaken" by a bad fall into the net while working with the bar act. He didn't go on with the flying act and the performance suffered. *Billboard's* review of the show stated: "The Flying Thrillers merely went through the motions this opening night, and not very well at that. . . . Without Voise the timing was bad." Often the manager of a flying act would call all cues when to swing off and release the bar. This incident could be interpreted as an indication of the sacrifice which the manager of a flying act must make if he wants to retain complete control. Harold expected to be back with the flying act by the time they reached Owensboro on April 22.<sup>30</sup>

Eventually Harold's other bar act was working independently that year. The program of the St Louis Police Circus as listed in April included a Voise bar act performing with the Bob Eugene Troupe in Display 12.<sup>31</sup>

When the Cole Bros. Circus played Bloomington, Illinois in May *Billboard* reported that it was like "old home week for the Voise Troupe." Bert and Agnes Doss visited the Voises on the show at this time along with well known Bloomington circus fan Harold Ramage. Harold added P. T. Lewis and Eddie Kohl to his bar act and the *Billboard* credited the Voises with two of the best bar acts in the business. "His flying act," it was said, "takes a bit of a beating," no doubt meaning, by comparison to his bar acts. It is worth mentioning here that by the late 19th century the flying bar acts (trapeze acts) had nearly supplanted the stationary bar acts in the audience's expectations of what a sensational circus aerial performance should consist of. While the outstanding bar acts never died out entirely (notably the teams of Chavette, Newell, and Chavette; the Loretta Twins; and the Walter Guice troupe) they were not common after the turn of the century. Still, performers recognized that performing a bar act could be more difficult than trapeze performance in some ways, since a swinging trapeze bar provided

the momentum and lift to swing out, while a stationary bar act requires the performer to provide these for himself through sheer force of strength. This is one of the principal reasons why stationary bar acts were so rare. Bar performers have generally had the respect of other aerial performers for this reason. Though the field was limited, crediting Voise with the best bar acts in the business was a great compliment.<sup>32</sup>

In March of 1947 Harold and Eileen visit-



Eileen, Harold and Jack Voise doing a passing leap in the late 1940s. Illinois State University Special Collection.

ed friends Mr. and Mrs. Tom Gregory while performing with the Cleveland Grotto Circus. The Flying Thrillers performed along with the Siegrists in Display 22 at the Garden Bros. Circus in Toronto, Canada in April. Charles Siegrist might have retired by this time although he continued to coach his flying act in which his wife Helen was working for many years after his retirement.<sup>33</sup>

Voise's bar acts were called the "Voise Troupe" and the "Harolds" in Display 3 of the Cole Bros. Circus in 1947. "Harold Voise's Flying Thrillers" were featured in Display 29. The *Billboard* of April 26 stated that Harold had invented a new method guying out bar and flying act riggings without blocks or falls. It was said that he had developed a new ratchet with which the rigging could be guyed out by one man in five minutes. This sort of technical innovation was seldom recognized by the public although it was always appreciated within the profession, where sometimes the performance itself seemed to be eclipsed by these tedious, mundane duties. Jack Voise had returned as catcher for the Flying Thrillers and for the first time in several years and Eileen was able to complete a blindfolded double full twister, her favorite trick. The *Daily Pantagraph* reported on the Cole show when it played in Bloomington April 27: "Familiar Bloomington faces will be seen by patrons who witness the Cole Brothers circus in its one day stand here Monday. Perhaps best known here in Bloomington is Mrs. Mayme Ward, sole surviving member of the original

'Flying Wards,' who has recently been placed in charge of ballet girls with the Cole show.

#### "Flyers From Bloomington

"Also well known here are the "Flying Thrillers," who received their training under the late Eddie Ward Sr. Included in the act are Harold and Jack Voise, both of Bloomington, and Eileen Larey, who was married to Wayne Larey, a Bloomingtonian, who is now booking acts for an Australian circus."<sup>34</sup>

Similar remarks were made in another write-up the following day. In October Eileen took a "nasty buster" and George Voise was reportedly doing a splendid job substituting for her although he hadn't worked in the flying act for nearly two years. On closing with the show in October the Voises went on to Baltimore.<sup>34</sup>

Through the winter months the Voise troupes again worked various indoor dates. They played the Polack Bros. Circus in Baltimore in November presenting the bar act, and the flying act worked along with the Flying LaForms. Both the bar act and the flying act were presented for Frank Wirth's Circus at Portland, Maine in November, and Harold cancelled a tour of Cuba to play the Cleveland Grotto Circus December 3-January 1. An article in the May-June, 1948 *White Tops* by Tom Gregory stated that during their six weeks in Cleveland they made two new nets for the act. The article followed with an interesting description of net making. The Voises presented a three person bar act and their flying act on the Polack Bros. Eastern Unit in Wilmington, Delaware early in 1948.<sup>35</sup>

With most of his people back from military service Harold was able to present two bar acts and two flying acts again. In 1948 the entire company of aerialists worked the opening of the Clyde Beatty Circus. The double flying act consisted of five flyers and two catchers. The March 27 *Billboard* provided a list of those with Harold's flying acts that year: "Leaving us on opening day for other spots were Harold, Eileen, George, and Jack Voise, Rose Behee, and Pat Pasquelin." It was reported that Elden Day's wife, JoAnn, had left for Henderson, North Carolina, "to wait for the stork." Her parents, Joe and Bebe Siegrist, had left for Chicago, and Francis and Claire Reiner had also left the show. They toured with the Cole Bros. Circus through the regular tent season with both bar acts, called "Voise and Harold Troupes Comedy Aerial Bars," and with the Thrillers flying return act, which *Billboard* stated "has lost none of its punch." When the show played in Bloomington in May it was reported that the "dressing room was full of flyers and catchers." Visitors to the show were Benny Gibson, a catcher formerly with Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers and other troupes; Helen Billetti, of the great Billetti wire act; Clyde Noble, a catcher for the original Fly-

ing Fisher troupe as far back as the 1890s; Bert and Agnes Doss; Gene Enos of the Enos perch act; Chuck and Evelyn Simpson, daughter of Herb and Rose Fleming and former flyer with the Flying Flemings; Mickey King, Art Concello Sr., father of Art Concello; Mr. and Mrs Emmett Kelly; Clara and Francis Reiner; Walt Graybeal of the Flying LeClaires and many other flying acts; and many others. In May Eileen left the show to undergo a second shoulder operation in New York for injuries suffered with the flying act. Early in July it was reported that Jack and Alberta Voise's daughter, Linda, had celebrated a birthday while with the show. The Voises were visited by family when the show played at Bay City, Michigan.<sup>36</sup>

That winter the Voises played indoor dates for Orrin Davenport. The Flying Harolds played the Chicago Coliseum Christmas Show in late 1948 and followed with the O-Ton-Ta-La Toledo Grotto Shrine Circus in Display 23 early in 1949. The January 15 *Billboard* reported that "Harold Voise is smoking even bigger cigars this year." The Flying Harolds appeared in Display 25 of the 31st Annual Zurah Shrine Circus in Minneapolis and Rose Behee and Dian Voise, possibly Harold's sister, appeared on web with others in Display 12. The predicted attendance of the thirteen day stand at Minneapolis was 112 to 115 thousand. In February two proud fathers, Elden Day and George

The Flying Harolds/Thrillers on Polack Bros. Circus in 1952, Eileen Voise, George Voise, Harold Voise and Dick Anderson. Illinois State University Special Collections.



Valentine, were photographed with baby daughters, Delores Ellen Day and Cherie Valentine. The *Pantagraph* photo was captioned "Valentine Day."<sup>37</sup>

The Voises returned to Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey in 1948 for the first and only time since 1934. The Flying Harolds appeared along with three of Art Concello's troupes: the Concellos, the Artonys, and the Comets in Display 23. Voise also presented a bar act with the Barnes Bros. Circus at the Chicago Stadium. Harold's flying act with Ringling Bros. was made up of himself, Eileen, and brother, Jack. Harold's second flying act played Shrine dates for Frank Wirth, including the Syracuse Shrine show and four weeks in Canada which included the Winnipeg Shrine Circus in May. This second troupe was made up of Rose Behee, George Voise, and catcher Jack Bray. It was reported that Harold had a third flying act playing independent dates but the personnel of this troupe was not listed. Harold's flying act left the Ringling show after the Boston engagement to play for Orrin Davenport along with Fred Valentine's act. Harold and Jack were also presenting a bar act with the Davenport show in Wichita. Ringling gossip in the November 12 *Billboard* reported that the Voise troupe was on hand for a visit.<sup>38</sup>

Through the 1950s Harold Voise presented acts for Polack Bros. as well as other indoor circuses. His troupes often appeared in Bloomington during this period and were always well received. In July 1950 they appeared with Polack Bros. Circus at Wesleyan Stadium in Bloomington. The troupe as pictured in the *Daily Pantagraph* included Harold and his step-daughter Arden Larey, George Voise, and catcher Buck Josephs. In 1951 Voise presented flying act for Tom Pack's Thrill Circus in Display 9 along with the Zacchinis. From 1953 through 1957 Harold presented one or both of his flying acts with Polack Bros. Circus. They appeared in Bloomington with Polack Bros. at Wesleyan Stadium at the end of July 1953 with a five person flying act. In 1954 Voise presented two flying acts on the Polack Bros. program and in 1955 Harold was production manager with the show as well as presenting a four person flying act. The *Daily Pantagraph* reported when the show played in Bloomington in July: "According to Mrs. Bessie Polack, owner-director of the circus, Voise has brought up to date lighting systems into use, developed a midget stake driver . . . which speeds up erecting the show and adopted automatic loading methods."<sup>39</sup>

Through most of the decade of the 1950s the Voises also presented a flying act with the Clyde Beatty Circus.

Jim Olson had broken in with Billy

Wardin 1947 with the Flying Duwards. In 1953 Billy disbanded the troupe to go with one of the acts with the Ringling show. Olson went to California to visit his friend Billy Hill who owned a dance studio in southern California. By chance, Hill happened to meet Rose Behee in a clothing store in Los Angeles. Rose mentioned that they were looking for a catcher for George Voise's flying act. At that time both of Harold's flying acts were quartered in Hollywood and Harold was doing stunts as stand-in for Burt Lancaster's film, "The Three Loves." When Billy Hill told Rose that Jim Olson was in town Rose eagerly made arrangements for Olson to audition for George's act at Universal Studios. Olson recalled in detail these 36 years later one of the most outstanding days of his life.

Jim was then 32 years old. He borrowed a yellow Ford convertible from Hill's brother, Carl, and drove to the studio where the guard at the gate passed him through. "I had been in town for a couple of weeks," Olson told me, "and I was tanned and my hair was bleached out from the California sun. I had on my dark glasses driving this big Ford convertible. There was this bunch of young girls standing outside the studio looking for celebrities, and when the security guard passed me through I heard one of them say, 'Hey! who's that guy!' They thought I really was somebody. I never let on. I drove in there like I did it every day."

The catcher for Harold's other flying act was Dick Anderson. Olson auditioned for George's act, which was under contract to play for the Clyde Beatty show that year.

Harold and Eileen Voise appearing in a Polack Bros. Circus performance in July 1953. Illinois State University Special Collections.





Jim had never caught for any troupe other than for the Flying Duwards. Billy Ward, Olson told me, never gave any kick in returning to the flybar from the hands of the Catcher. Now Olson was about to audition for the Voices. Harold told him, "George is going to throw you a double with a somersault back." They caught the trick easily and in throwing his single back to the flybar George kicked up and Olson threw him as high as the ceiling rafters of the studio. "Come on down," Harold told him. "You've got the job." Olson worked with George Voise's troupe for three or four years along with Harold's flying act on the Beatty show.

Olson said that Harold Voise had one unusual superstitious habit. "Harold would come into the dressing tent," Olson said, "and he would change entirely from his street clothes into his tights without once taking his cigar out of his mouth or his hat off his head. It was the most comical thing I've ever seen." Buster Melzora also recalls once while at practice in later years Voise swung off on the flybar with a cigar in his mouth. "He burnt himself pretty bad," Buster tells us, "I could have told him something like that would happen."

Jim Olson later worked as catcher for Harry LaMar's flying act in the late 1950s before retiring from trapeze work to work his farm in rural Bloomington.<sup>40</sup> I was fortunate to be able to call Jim Olson a friend from 1985 until his death in October of 1987.

In 1958 Harold Voise retired from trapeze work and booked a small indoor circus of his own out of Sarasota, Florida, which he called Harold Bros. Circus. Among other acts featured with this show was his broth-

The Harold Voise Troupe on the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1952. Left to right Dick Anderson, Harold Voise, Eileen Voise, actress Pierre Angelo, Rose Behee, George Voise and Jim Olson. Jim Olson collection.

er's bar act, which he called the "Aerial Georges" and a flying act which featured George as the principal flyer. In 1959 this act was called the "Flying Satelites" and was made up of Ralph Oyseth, catcher; George Voise, and Rene and Madalaine Geraldo. Harold and George both resided in the vicinity of Sarasota until their deaths, within just a few months of one another, in 1986.<sup>41</sup>

I had the pleasure of meeting Harold Voise and Art Concello on an April afternoon in 1985. We sat looking through vintage photographs of various flying acts including the Flying Wards, the Thrillers, and the Harolds. Harold sat with his hat on his head, his cigar in his mouth, and to almost all of my incessant questions he would answer either "yep" or "nope." He struck me as being a congenial and friendly fellow and I wish I'd had many more years to get to know him.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Mickey King interview 1987.
2. *Daily Pantograph* October 12, 1928; June 24, 1960; *Decatur Herald Sun* November 13, 1932.
3. *Billboard* March 22, 1930; April 12.
4. *Ibid.* May 17, 1930; June 14; August 9.
5. *Ibid.* February 21, 1931; March 21; April 18; July 4; November 7.
6. *Ibid.* April 16, 1932; April 23.
7. *Ibid.* May 7, 1932; May 28; July 16; *White Tops* February 1933.
8. *White Tops* February 1933; Harold Genders interview June 21, 1987 & February 4, 1988; Jim Olson, Walt Graybeal, & Chuck Imig interview July 1987; Walt Graybeal interview January 29, 1988; Wayne Larey interview February 4, 1988.
9. *Billboard* March 4, 1933; April 15; September 30; October 28.
10. Mickey King interview December 1987; *Billboard* February 24, 1934; March 3; April 21; April 28; May 5; September 29; December 15.
11. *Daily Pantograph* June 29, 1927; Harold Genders interview June 21, 1987.
12. *Daily Pantograph* March 26, 1935; *Billboard* January 5, 1935; March 9; April 27; May 25; November 9.
13. *Billboard* February 1, 1936; February 8; February 22; March 21; April 4; December 19.
14. *Ibid.* May 18, 1946; July 13, 1950; August 12, 1950.
15. *Daily Pantograph* July 30, 1944; July 12, 1957; June 24, 1960; February 5, 1970.
16. *Billboard* February 24, 1934; March 3; March 10; March 31; *White Tops* Spring 1934.
17. *Billboard* February 2, 1935; April 18; April 27; May 25; September 7; November 9; Art Concello interview 1986.
18. *Billboard* February 29, 1936; April 18; Joseph T. Bradbury, "A History of the Cole Bros. Circus 1935-1940," *Bandwagon* January-February 1966.
19. *Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus Route Book* 1937; Bradbury, *Bandwagon* March-April 1966; *Daily Pantograph* November 29, 1937; *White Tops* April-May 1937; *Billboard* March 27, 1937; April 24; May 15; May 29; June 19; August 21.
20. Bradbury, *Bandwagon* September-October 1966; *Billboard* May 7, 1938.
21. Bradbury, *Bandwagon* November-December 1966.
22. *Billboard* February 18, 1939; March 4; May 13;
23. *Ibid.* January 30, 1940; February 17; March 4; April 20; April 27; July 6.
24. *Ibid.* January 18, 1941; January 25; February 1; February 8; February 15; March 1; March 15; April 12; April 26; May 10; November 8.
25. *Ibid.* February 21, 1942; March 28; April 4; May 2; July 25; October 10; January 9, 1943.
26. *Ibid.* January 30, 1943; May 15; December 25.
27. *Ibid.* January 29, 1944; February 26; March 25; June 24; August 19; August 26; September 16; October 14; November 11; March 24, 1945.
28. *Ibid.* November 25, 1944; December 9; January 13; 1945; February 24; March 17.
29. *Ibid.* April 28, 1945; May 5; September 15; October 6; October 27.
30. *Ibid.* March 16, 1946; April 27.
31. *Ibid.* April 27, 1946; May 11.
32. *Ibid.* May 11, 1946; May 18; August 31; Pierre Couderc, "Truth or Fiction, Legend or Fact," *Bandwagon* November-December 1964.
33. *Billboard* March 29, 1947; April 19.
34. *Ibid.* April 26, 1947; July 26; August 16; October 11; October 25.
35. *Ibid.* November 22, 1947; November 29; December 6; February 7, 1948.
36. *Billboard* February 21, 1948; March 27; April 24; May 15; May 29; June 5; July 10.
37. *Ibid.* January 8, 1949; January 15; January 29; March 12.
38. *Ibid.* April 2, 1949; April 16; April 23; May 7; May 28; November 12; November 19; December 17.
39. *Ibid.* May 13, 1950; *Daily Pantograph* July 27, 1950; July 26, 1953; July 29, 1953; July 30, 1955; July 19, 1957; *Bandwagon* July 1951.
40. James Olson interview March 17, 1987.
41. *White Tops* March-April 1959.

## Part Five

# HERBERT'S HORSES

By Dorothy Herbert

### CHAPTER 58 FRANK WALTERS

Frank Walters was born with money, lots of it, and more was always coming in. He had inherited this from his father, who first struck it rich in the oil business and then, being a very smart businessman, had invested his money in various other enterprises, including buying lots of real estate.

Frank, after finishing college, was at loose ends. Never one to sit around, he amused himself by collecting artifacts. He traveled far and wide. Before his enthusiasm waned he had established a small museum of his own. Some of the jewelry in it was fantastic, all handmade, all authentic. Tiring of that, he then went in for art, and some of the Western scenes he painted were beautiful.

He then married. His wife was very horse-minded and, although he did not care for riding himself, he indulged her. It was while riding at a horse show that she first met A. W. Kennard. He was showing horses for another lady, and Lucia Walters persuaded him to train her gaited horses. This, of course, was just a part-time deal, for A. W. was employed as sales manager by Raymond Pier-son who had the Ford dealership in Houston. Frank and A. W. became close friends; they both belonged to the Shrine, and Frank was very interested in the circus which they put on each year. One evening, over a glass of beer, A. W. happened to mention that he had spent some time with the Christy Bros. Cir-cus. He also mentioned that he had been taught to train animals by that noted trainer, Merrit Blue. Frank questioned him as to what kinds of animals he was able to break.

That was all that was needed to set Frank off on a new hobby. Whatever Frank did, he did in a big way. Frank, himself, was an ex-ceptionally big man. He seldom smiled, and had an air about him that demanded attention wherever he went. Since he owned property all over Houston, he chose a lovely spot just at the edge of town for his winter quarters. The spot had lofty trees loaded down with birds, and small wildlife.

First he had his barns and stables built. His plan: to have a complete circus in min-a-ture--a special show for the kiddies. He and his wife then traveled all over the United States buying up small circus wagons. When it became evident that he was not going to be able to purchase very many, nor the kinds that he wanted, he located an old wagon

builder and moved him, bag and baggage, to Houston.

I do not know how long this project took, but I do know that he ended up with a complete circus parade. This necessitated ponies to pull them, and also harness. Meanwhile, his training barn had been completed and acts were in the process of being trained.



Frank Walters, owner of a society cir-cus with winter quarters in Houston, Tex-as. Author's collection.

His ring barn was unique. You came up a long driveway and stopped before what looked like a beautiful home; in the front was a parking space for many cars. You entered into a huge room rather like the lobby of a hotel, there were couches, seats, and small ta-bles everywhere. The walls were lined with glass cases containing all sorts of silver and turquoise bridles, belts, and necklaces; in the center was a long table where, if they were entertaining guests, a meal could be served. Off to one side were the restrooms for ladies and gents and, at the far end, was the kitchen. At that same end there was a long flight of stairs, these led to the Walters' overnight bedroom in case they didn't wish to drive

home; next to that was a guest room and bath.

Back to the lounge room. When you pressed a button, the two walls on one side slid back and you were looking into the training arena, which contained the ring curb and various props. The steel arena for training wild animals was outdoors in the open. Frank bought a regular circus tent, complete with seats. The only things missing were a ticket wagon and ticket boxes--all of the seats were free.

When Frank had it all completed and the animals he bought were trained, he took the show around to different towns in Texas and would put on shows for underprivileged chil-dren beginning with a street parade in town. At each location the local merchants would donate all of the ice cream, soda pop, peanuts, and popcorn.

Each year the show became larger as they kept adding to it and more people be-came involved. Many circus people wintered in and around Houston and they would all donate their acts. The Shriners, their wives and youngsters worked most of Frank's animal acts.

A. W. broke a liberty horse act for Frank's wife to work, as well as a number of manege horses which were ridden by her friends. Merrit Blue, who was retired and living in Houston, broke a couple of pony drills and two dog acts; they also had a goat act.

As for Frank, he insisted on a lion act for himself. He persuaded Terrell Jacobs and his wife, Dolly, to winter at his quarters one year and, while there, Terrell trained a lion act for him. Just six lions, but Frank was a handsome man, the act was good, and the kids loved it.

Frank was a very good friend of Clyde Beatty and, after Clyde took out his own show, would often travel with it. It was ru-mored that his interest was more than just a bystander. During the off-season he and Clyde would take trips together, usually to some foreign country. Once they went on a safari with Frank Buck.

Whenever any circus came to Houston, Frank would invite some of the performers out to his training barn for a buffet supper af-ter the night show. After supper he would have some of his trained animals and han-dlers put on a show for us in the training ring. That was where I met A.W. for the first time; later on, he often came with Frank to visit the different shows I happened to be on. Since this was the man who Big Bob Stevens

had told me he was going to have train his stock for him, I thought I might look him up. I had not yet made up my mind if I was going to take Mr. Stevens' offer or not, but, since I had nothing else in mind at the moment, it was worth looking into.

I phoned Frank Walters, who was surprised to hear I was in town. I told him that I was trying to locate Mr. Kennard. Frank told me that he was no longer with the Ford Motor Company; he had gone into business for himself, running a used car lot. Frank said that if I would meet him that evening at his ring barn he would arrange for A. W. to be there also.

After I explained to A. W. what my connection with Mr. Stevens was, he said that he would appreciate any advice I might offer in helping choose the horses for the liberty act he was to break.

Finding the horses could be difficult. Mr. Stevens wanted a six-horse act: a black, a white, and a black and white; the same act that Rudynoff had had on the Sells-Floto Circus. Trying to find the horses in and around Houston was a lost cause. People there had money and were interested only in high-class show horses. Ordinary run of the mill horses, such as were used for a circus act, were not available. We would have to look elsewhere.

I mentioned knowing Jack Sellers in San Antonio, Texas, and how he had bragged about knowing the whereabouts of just about all of the horses in Texas. A. W. told me to call him and see if he had any idea of where we could find what we were looking for. He said that indeed he did, and we arranged a meeting for a few days later.

A. W. assigned one of his salesmen to handle his used car lot, and Mother offered to go to his office to answer the phone and take down messages. So, early one morning, we drove to San Antonio.

Jack had not been just bragging, he knew where to look for most any kind of horse. The trouble was that ranches in Texas were so large and far apart, it would take more time than any of us had to spare to try to run them down one at a time. He did know one man who had not only more kinds, but more horses than anyone else, period. In spite of being eccentric to an unbelievable degree, he might be just the man we were looking for.

Since it looked like we were going to have to stay overnight, Jack began calling all of the hotels and motels, but all of them were filled up. We would have to leave shortly to return to Houston, but decided to

have a talk with the man Jack had spoken of before going back. Jack piloted us out to his place and took us in to meet the one and only Mr. Glasscock.

He and his wife lived in a three room shack that looked as though it belonged to a sharecropper. The old man greeted us warmly and invited us in to sit a spell. The living-sitting-dining room was unbelievable. A large, bare wooden table dominated the center of the floor, with wooden crates serving as chairs. The place was devoid of any decorations whatsoever. The one jarring note was the most beautiful piano I had ever seen; it set off to one side by itself, and on top of it were assorted frames with photos of boys and girls who looked to be of all different nationalities.



An aerial view of the Frank Walters winter quarters in Houston, Texas. Pfening Archives.

Mr. Glasscock, himself, was a sight to behold. He wore a pair of once-blue coveralls with about a five inch tear down one knee, exposing the fact that he was wearing long-handled underwear in the heat of summer. His long white hair hung down to his shoulders, and his beard touched his chest; its whiteness marred by tobacco stains from the wad he seemed to chew constantly.

Jack explained the reason for our visit and the old man said he was sure that he had what we were looking for, but it was a long way out to the ranch and an early morning start would be advisable. A. W. told him that we were going to have to go back to Houston right away, as no accommodations in the area were available.

The old man asked what it was we were in need of and A. W. told him we needed two single rooms. Mr. Glasscock went to the phone and when he came back he said it was all arranged and told us the name of the hotel, which happened to be the largest in San Antonio, and he would meet us there in the morning.

At the hotel we were given the red carpet treatment, with the hotel clerk choosing to ignore the fact that we had no luggage, not

having planned to stay over. We said goodnight and A. W. retired to his room while I went to the drugstore and bought a few necessary items, such as a toothbrush and some toothpaste.

Next morning, Jack met us for an early breakfast. The dining room was quite elegant, with the waitresses all decked out in their pretty, starched uniforms. We were seated quite far back; I heard Jack (who always looked like a men's fashion plate) give a little gasp and I turned just as old man Glasscock waved and called out, "Hi there, girlie," causing many heads to turn and stare. He came over and sat down, and we hurried through the rest of our repast and then headed for the front door. Mr. Glasscock, who had not seen fit to change clothes since yesterday, now offered me his arm as if we were about to enter a ballroom for a dance.

Jack and A. W. got into some sort of controversy over the bill, only to find that the meal had already been paid for by Mr. Glasscock. I did not feel very good about that, as I figured the old man could ill afford it.

When we got to the car, no one asked me if I had my "druthers," I was ushered into the

back seat with Mr. Glasscock while Jack sat in front with A.W. They engaged in mental talk, while the old boy figured it was up to him to keep me entertained. I had heard all of my life that Texans were prone to brag and exaggerate (or maybe even stretch the truth to make an impression), but this old man didn't only take the cake, he took the whole darn bakery!!

As we were passing by a building, he would point it out and say, "I had that building built," or "See that library there, I gave that to the city." He even professed to owning the largest department store in town. There was no doubt about it, the old coot was stark raving mad, and I wondered how long this ride was going to last; forever, it seemed. Once in a while he would lean over the front seat and give A. W. instructions as to where to turn, etc.

After a time, A. W. began to get worried and asked him how much longer it was going to be before we reached our destination, to which the old man replied, "Ain't but a hop, skip, and a holler."

A. W. stated, "With the gas rationing and all, I am wondering if I am going to be able to go much farther and also get back."

"Don't give her a thought, Sonny," said Glasscock, "just pull into the next gas station." We did, and the attendant filled up the car and refused either stamps or money.

Some time later, old man Glasscock directed A. W. to pull off onto a private road, which seemed to go on for miles. On either side of the road, lined up like deserted tract houses, were oil wells, most of them merrily pumping away. For some reason or other, each of them seemed to have a name and even a birth date, which the old man rattled off as we drove by.

We came, at last, to a large ranch house with numerous small bunkhouses in a row down one side; a mess hall and kitchen were at the far end. It looked like we were expected, as an ample supply of cowpokes came out to greet us. It transpired that the old man had called ahead the night before and they had gone out and rounded up several herds of wild horses, and had them penned up in corrals awaiting inspection.

The head wrangler was the tallest, most handsome Indian I had ever seen. He seemed to tower over everyone else. He was a wizard with the rope and, as the horses circled the corral, he would catch whichever horse was pointed out to him. He spoke not one word of English, but Mr. Glasscock seemed to have complete command of whatever language he did speak.

Thinking out loud, I noted what a remarkable man I thought the Indian to be; to which Mr. Glasscock replied, "You ought to see his son, I'm sending him to college." Oh, brother!

We picked out the most desirable of the candidates, and Mr. Glasscock said that he would have them delivered to Jack's stables, which he had offered the use of, within a few days.

We then ate with the cowboys in the mess hall. Huge bowls were piled high with potatoes, brown beans, rice, stewed canned tomatoes, corn, homemade bread, and steaks the size of a pot roast.

There was complete silence at the table, with everyone intent on their food, with the exception of old man Glasscock, who now attempted to impress me with tall tales of his gold and zircon mines in Mexico. He said that he would like to fly me there in his airplane some day . . . and there was still the long road back to San Antonio to look forward to!

When we got back to the hotel, I excused myself and left them to finish up their business. I was hoping the old man would be able to make himself a nice profit on the deal. Not wishing to run into them in the dining room, I ordered some food sent up to my room.

A. W. phoned me early the next morning, saying that he would like to get started back to Houston as soon as possible. When we

went to the desk to check out, the clerk said that there was no charge. A. W. did not understand and asked for an explanation.

"Gee, I thought you knew," said the clerk, "Mr. Glasscock owns this hotel, as well as many other businesses in this city. He even donated the grounds and a great deal of money towards our college. You see, he himself never had a chance to get an education and he thinks that is the most important thing on earth. I understand he has in his home a piano, and on it photos of kids he adopted and

act. As soon as he returned, he had a ring curb made and then went to work on the horses. He continued to live in town while running his used car business, and came out each day to work the horses. Mother and I felt safe with Jimmy there with us.

Several months of hard work followed. Then came the rains, and it was impossible to do anything since the ring was outdoors. Frank Walters had been spending a lot of time at the ranch, watching the training and offering advice. Now he suggested that we

load everything and take it to his winter quarters and work the horses there. Due to the war, gas shortage, and the scarcity of help, Frank's show was no longer in operation and there was plenty of room. We were glad to accept his kind offer.

Frank and his wife had recently separated, so he spent most of his time at his barn. He was a very likeable person once you got to know him. We spent many pleasant evenings in his club room after the day's training

was over.

Then came the time for the deal to be consummated. I, of course, had not been aware of what the agreement between them had been. I did know that A. W. kept close watch and retained all of the bills he paid; how much he had paid for the horses, I did not know. Although I had gone with him to pick them out, I did not stay around when the deals were made. One thing I was sure of though, was that the trappings for the horses had cost a great deal, as I had the harnesses for the ponies made at the same place, and they did not come cheap.

I was never told just what transpired; all I ever knew was the A. W. and Mr. Stevens got into an argument and that their deal fell through. I assumed it had something to do with the amount of money involved. Since all of the money spent had been A. W.'s, he was now in possession of a liberty horse act, something he certainly did not want.

This left me in a predicament also. I now not only did not have a job, I had spent all of my savings on a pony drill, for which I now had no use. I had to come up with something in a hurry.

I called Orrin Davenport and asked if he might be able to use me on the indoor shows. He said, "Yes. And where have you been, and what are you doing in Texas?"

I told him that I had gone there in the first place looking for gas stamps, and had been detained, which didn't make much sense at all.

He told me to catch a train and get back there. They were using the Cole show stock and somebody would be able to come up with something for me to do.



This Frank Walters cross cage had been on Bailey Bros. Circus in 1935 and was originally from the Great Loranz Dog & Pony show at the turn of the century. Pfening Archives.

put through school. He bought the piano for one of his proteges who he took into his home as a barefoot, hungry, little boy and who is now a famous musician."

When we got back to Houston, A. W. rented a ranch on the outskirts of town, with a barn for the stock. He then asked me to go with him to help pick out the two horses which he was to break for manege. While looking for these horses, we happened upon some beautiful, matched black and white spotted ponies. I called Mr. Stevens, who was now in his own winter quarters putting his new show together, and asked if I were to buy the ponies, would he have a place for them on his show? He said he certainly would. I had in mind that if I were to help Mr. Kennard break the liberty horse drill, he would, in turn, help me break my pony drill; this he agreed to do.

A. W. told me where I might hire a truck, and I sent it to Gonzales to pick up my horses and Jimmy. I then took my trailer to the ranch, and that is where Mother and I stayed. There was a house on the ranch, but we did not have any furniture. We did take advantage of the bathroom in the house, and it was nice to have a tub bath after all that time of having to shower in the tiny trailer.

In the meantime, A. W. went with a truck back to San Antonio, bought two palamino stallions from Jack Sellers to break for manege, and picked up his horses for the liberty

That somebody was John Smith. I was given the same black high school horse that I had ridden at the Wichita date a long time before. They had a gaited horse number, and I rode Mrs. Terrell's personal horse, LeRose McAdams, a sweetheart; it brought back memories of Jack Dempsey. Once more I worked John Smith's pony drill.

For the jumping number, they brought forth a very large horse called Pale Face. Without my own, personally trained horses, I was expected to do only the regular jump like the other riders. We rehearsed, and all went well.

Then came time for the first show--the pony drill was early in the program. I ran into the ring and gave a hitch kick and turned to face the ponies, to discover that they were NUDE, no trappings at all. The surprise was that they worked; John wanted to show everyone how well-trained they were.

My gaited horse worked fine, as did the high school horse later in the show. They did not have a rearing horse, though I am sure John would have managed to come up with one quick if anyone had asked him.

The last number in the show, before the cannon act, was the jumps. Since I was not doing anything special in the number, I was not being featured. I figured out later that this was more than John could stand. For seemingly no reason, except maybe to quiet the horse, who I must say, was fidgety, John came and stood by his head. He let all of the other riders jump first, then he motioned for the jump to be raised so high I thought he must be out of his mind.

Satan and I had jumped six feet, twice a day, but we were a team, trained together, the same with Rex. Now here I was, on a strange horse, and a hurdle so high I was petrified. As a final gesture, John stepped forward, with much elan, and removed the bridle from the horse. With no reins to hold on to, what was there to do but throw my arms over my head.

The horse, as John had known he would, cleared the hurdle with room to spare. This is the only time I can recall ever having an announcement after an act: "And there, ladies and gentlemen, is the one and only Dorothy Herbert."

I did not know it at the time, but John, at the instigation of Mr. Terrell, was setting the stage for me to go back with his show.

With all of the complications I now had and they were unaware of, it would have been an impossibility. First and foremost, there was my mother, who, having no place to go, I would have to keep with me . . . railroad shows do not permit mothers to travel with their grown daughters. Next, there was the pony drill in which I had so much invested, and which they would have no use for since they had their own. There was just no way.

I contemplate a question arising in the



Horse trainer John Smith worked with Dorothy on winter dates. Pfening Archives.

minds of my readers: What had become of the money from the sale of the house and ring barn? Located right off the main highway, it must have fetched a tidy sum. This, Mother considered HER nest egg, and it was not to be touched, in any case.

Working the indoor shows that year was fun, I hadn't realized how much I had missed all of my friends. We had so many things to talk about and catch up on, the time was all too short.

When I returned to Houston after the indoor dates, I was halfway engaged to a wild animal trainer. When I say "halfway," he had asked me to marry him and I told him that I would let him know right after I got back to Houston; I felt that I owed it to my mother to talk over such a step with her.

The name of the man is of no importance to this story. Suffice to say I had known him for a long time and had never dreamed of his interest toward me until we renewed our acquaintance on the indoor shows. He felt, and I agreed with him, that together we could do a lot of great things in show business. He was of the opinion that if I were to work his wild animal act it might enhance its value but we never had a chance to find out.

Mother and A. W. met me at the train, I was very tired from the long trip. We drove out to Guido's, a very exclusive restaurant. I had little to say, A. W. and Mother did all of the talking, and they were full of news about what had happened while I was gone. Frank and A. W. had kept Mother entertained while I was away. Since they both dined out, they had seen to it that she was included. She had been to several rodeos and horse shows, and had not had time to be lonesome.

On the way home to the little trailer, Mother was on the front seat next to A. W.,

and I was in the back. I was sleepy and had just started to doze off when I heard A. W. say, "Mrs. Herbert, would you mind if I married your daughter?"

To this, Mother replied, "It would make me very happy indeed. I do not have long to live and I would die happy if I knew she had someone like you to look after her."

We were married in Frank Walters' home. Just a few people, Frank and his mother, my mother, and a few of A. W.'s friends were guests. Our honeymoon was short, we went to Galveston for two days. While there, we made our plans: A. W. would sell his used car business and buy a semi to transport the horses; I would go to Chicago and book some fairs.

I was a little leery starting out with all of this green stock, but what else was there to do? At least I was sure of Black Hawk, King Kong, and Rex. I booked just a few fairs to start with. If our unit was successful, more would come later.

When I returned to Houston, Jimmy was gone, he had left without saying a word to anyone. I was sure that someone had done something to make him go. I found out much later what had happened. He had been injured in the war, now he was hurting again. He had not wanted to bother anyone with his troubles, so he went to the veteran's hospital, where they removed another piece of shrapnel. They kept him there for quite some time, and when he was well again, he rejoined me. I never knew how he managed to find out where I was--just, one day, he reappeared. But, for now, he was gone.

## CHAPTER 59 ANOTHER LIFE TO LIVE--FAIRS

During the winter of 1944-1945 my husband A. W. Kennard and I watched the building of the Austin Bros. Circus in the Gonzales winter quarters of the Dailey show. Ben Davenport had taken Harry Hammel as partner and they were framing a new ten car railroad show for the 1945 season. When the show opened in Austin, Texas on April 30 A. W. and I were with it.

I worked my dog act and high jumping horse and rode manage with Elizabeth Kitchen. We left the show after about a month.

A. W. bought a large semi, and he hired a young couple he knew that were very anxious to break into show business. Harold was a tall, lanky guy who chattered constantly, asking a million questions and then not waiting for an answer. He grinned far too much, and was so nervous he made others feel that way. His wife was a petite gal and everyone called her "Tiny"; she must have had another name, but that is all that I ever heard her called. She had a whiney little voice, was prone to complaining, and she expected Harold to drop whatever he was doing and fetch for her. Harold had fixed a little compartment in the front of the truck for them to live

in. They were supposed to care for the stock and ride the two manege horses. I had misgivings, but they were A.W.'s friends and this was his ballgame. So there we were . . . starting out with green stock and green people.

So that is how we began our life together, A. W. and I, he driving the truck with Harold and Tiny in the front seat with him, plus Tiny's two dogs; me driving my car with Mother by my side and, behind me, the little trailer.

I had thought the trailer small before, but now, with three of us living in it, it seemed to have shrunk. Plus, since there was no running water in the truck, Harold and his wife had to wash up in the trailer. The dinette-bed in the front of the trailer, where A. W. and I tried to sleep, was small, and I found out that he was a very restless sleeper. The only place where I could get some rest was sleeping in the front seat of the car.

The journey to the first stand was not bad, with everyone in a jovial mood. Mother loved to travel and see new sights; A.W. was reliving his boyhood days on a circus; and Tiny was dreaming of being a big star. If Harold had a thought of any kind, it was in a strange place. I was the only one who was depressed, but then, I was the only one that knew wherefore I worried.

We planned it so that we would get to our first stand several days in advance of the show, so as to acclimate the green stock to working in new surroundings. It was a good thing that we did as we had our first lesson when it came time to load the truck in Houston. The horses, although trained to do a liberty act, had a whole lot more to learn with regard to being loaded into a truck.

Now, the training of the horses and ponies had begun out in the open. Then, because of the heavy Texas rains, we had later moved to Frank Walter's ring barn, with the security of four walls. Now we were out in the open again, with all kinds of new sounds and different smells. Remember, we were working with untrained Texas broncs. We had brought along the electric fence to be placed around the outside of the ring, and a good thing, as we really needed it. I was sure glad that I had had the foresight to book small fairs to start off with.

We took the horses one by one into the ring, then kept adding one as they gained confidence and settled down. At the end of a couple of days they were still nervous, but working.

It was when we got ready to practice the manege high school act that we ran into real trouble. Things had already begun to live up

to my worst expectations. Tiny refused to have anything to do with the big horses, and would only go near the ponies. Harold had assured A. W. that Tiny was an accomplished horsewoman; I could not help but wonder why A. W. had not bothered to find out if this were true.



Dorothy in the back yard of Austin Bros. Circus on opening day in Austin, Texas March 30, 1945. Al Conover collection.

The two palomino stallions, I will admit, were a little peppy, but not all that bad. Tiny hit the dirt about the second waltz--seems she had ridden on a Western saddle, but never had been on an English saddle before. She picked herself up and announced that she had had it. So, A. W. rode one horse and Harold the other.

A. W. was then obliged to hire another man to help take care of the stock. This posed another problem. The new man had to have a place to ride. Since the back of my car was filled to the rooftop with Mother's and A. W.'s things, there was no room there. Mother refused to have him sit next to her on the front seat, ditto Tiny and her two dogs. It ended with Tiny riding with us and the new man holding the dogs on his lap.

When booking this new unit for the first time, I had been unable to limit the number of miles we would travel in any given time, and some of the distances were long. Temps grew short, and, the weather was unbearably hot. There was no such thing as air conditioning in trailers at that time. With it sitting all day, right out in the infield, it was like walking into an oven. One day Mother could stand it no longer and she packed up and left. She went to visit relatives in Cincinnati.

Surprisingly, the green stock worked well and we received more bookings. The season, though not too pleasant, wasn't a total loss; however, I was glad to see it draw to a close.

Frank Walters had invited us to spend the winter at his place, and a bit of a rest was

welcome. Mother joined us as soon as we got back to Houston. Frank offered her the guest rooms in his training barn, saying that A. W. and I ought to have some time to get acquainted, as we had been too busy while on the road; so A. W. and I had the little trailer to ourselves.

As a rule, there are many conflicts between two people who are in the business of training animals. Whenever working with a new horse trainer, I made it a point to try and do things his way, and learn all I could from him in the process. One thing that I had never liked to do was argue. After I was married, I started to wonder how I ought to handle it if I did not always agree with A. W.'s methods of training.

A. W. had received his basic training from Merrit Blue on the Christy Bros. Circus; Merrit had served his apprenticeship with Ray Thompson. I considered Ray a wonder trainer who turned out well-trained horses without straining them to the breaking point; while others I worked with might not have achieved the same spectacular results in as short a period of time.

I wondered how I might best impart to A. W. some of the things I had learned from other trainers without hurting his ego. I hit upon a method that worked out beautifully: I never made a comment in the ring barn, I would wait until after dinner, when we were alone and relaxed, and then I would go into a long drawn-out tale about how so-and-so had trained a certain horse to do a trick; I never suggested that he do likewise. Before long, I found that he was asking how different trainers handled each situation. Without ever having to ask me what I would do, he had the answers. The acts that he turned out were first rate. He did, however, have one drawback, he was not good at presenting a number. He was so intent on seeing that the animals worked perfectly, that he paid no attention to the audience, whatsoever.

This worked out all right in the long run. Ham that I was, I delighted in working all of the acts and taking the bows. A. W., in turn, liked to train animals, but was not too happy about presenting them. He was not the only one to which this applied. I have found that a great many trainers are so intent on keeping their animals working that the audience is of secondary importance. Now, this is great up to a certain point, but bear in mind that the people watching the show are the ones who are paying the tab, and they deserve something for their money. At least that was my attitude, and I tried to do my best for them at

each performance, whether the crowd was large or small.

If one of the animals which I was working made a mistake, I just laughed it off and corrected it at the next performance. In the event it happened twice, we would then have a refresher course between shows.

As a wedding present, A. W. had given me a beautiful white stallion. Most girls, at some time in their life, get a diamond ring. There had not been time to train the horse before taking off on our first jaunt, so we had left him with Frank Walters.

I had been quite taken with Dr. Ostermaier's horse, when he first came to this country, so A. W. broke the stallion for that act-dressage on the long reins. We had rhinestones on white leather trappings made for the horse, and a lovely white wardrobe for me, with turquoise ostrich plumes galore on both of us.

A convention is held each year in Chicago, and it is there that agents, acts, and fair personnel congregate, and deals are made for the forthcoming season. While there, I found that units like ours were much in demand and I could get us work that would not entail such long jumps. But it was the agent, Boyle Woolfolk, who set me off on the right track. "Dorothy," he said, "if you could somehow get hold of a dog act, we would book you into all of our fairs without having to hire any other animal people for that date. We would, of course, raise your salary to make it worth your while."

When I got back to Houston, I told A. W. about the conversation with Boyle. (And, if you are still with me, Dear Reader, this is when I went to the dogs.)

Merrit Blue, who was acquainted with all of the animal people in Houston, told us of this little old lady who had a dog act that he thought might be bought. Her husband had passed away and, as she did not know what else to do with them, she had just kept them.

We obtained her address and paid a visit. A worse-looking bunch of mutts I had never seen, but they did quite a good act. A. W., ever the optimist, said, "All of the necessary props are here. I will go to the dog pound, pick up some more prospects, train them, add to these, and we will have a dog act." After the original dogs were bathed and clipped, they did not look too bad. A.W. bought a rhesus monkey and, at the same time he was adding to the dog act, he broke a riding dog and monkey act. When we got to the first fair, I understood what the agent had meant: we could be every other act. With some aerial acts and a few on the ground, no other acts were necessary. With gas rationing being what it was,

this was a boon for everyone concerned.

Our second season on the road, we started out by playing a series of fairs in Minnesota. The farms there were lovely, everything so neat and clean. The houses and barns all looked as though they had just been newly painted; not a scrap of rubbish anywhere. I could not help but wonder where they put their trash. Everywhere we went, the people were so very friendly. The fair was a big event to them each year. This was before the invasion of television, and they really enjoyed the grandstand shows.

The townsfolk got a big kick out of watching us load and unload the semi. Everywhere we went, people were amazed at the amount of stuff we carried on the one truck. Often we were asked when the rest of our outfit was going to arrive; this was also asked by the fair director who had hired us.

This one semi carried eighteen head of horses and ponies, consisting of the six horse liberty act, six pony drill, two palomino manege horses, King, Rex, Black Hawk, and the white stallion. Underneath the truck on one side were boxes, each containing a dog or a monkey; sixteen in all. Each of them had their own cage and each had plenty of room. On the other side was stored the ring curb and all of the props used in the different numbers; hay and grain was loaded on an overhead rack above the cab; and just behind the cab we had a large tank for water.

A. W. had hired two men to look after the stock, and A. W. and I moved into the little compartment Harold and Tiny had occupied, thus leaving the trailer to Mother.

We had a good unit, but it was hard on me. The acts that we presented, with a few aerial and ground acts in between, ran as follows: Riding dogs and monkeys . . . . I worked White stallion on the long reins . . . I worked Dog Act . . . . I worked Pony Drill . . . . I worked Dressage . . . . A.W. and another man

The C. R. Montgomery Circus setting up for a show during the 1946 season. Pfening Archives.



Dressage (Black Hawk) . . . . I worked Waltz and Rear (Rex) . . . . I worked Liberty Horse Act . . . . I worked Fire Jup (Rex) . . . . I worked

Each of the acts which I worked required a complete change of wardrobe. I had worked just as hard with a circus, but there, when I was finished I could go to the train and relax. Now, besides the acts, there was the packing up, loading, and driving the house trailer overland. True, I had driven overland with the Lewis show, but I had not had all the extra work to do. Quite often, when the others went to eat, I would just lie down and rest.

Upon our return to Houston after the fairs, we learned that a real catastrophe had occurred just a few days before we arrived: Frank Walters' winter quarters had burned to the ground. The help who lived on the premises had managed to save the livestock, but the ring barn and the long barn, which had housed his little parade wagons, had all been lost before the fire trucks could get there. Frank gave some of his stock to Clyde Beaty, and the lions to Terrell Jacobs, and that was the end of his show.

A. W. finally found an old ramshackle barn on the outskirts of town for the horses, and there we would spend the winter months. Not a pleasant prospect, at best. It wasn't too bad on sunny days when we could go outside, but on cold rainy days, when we had to sit huddled in the little trailer, it was murder. It was also difficult to prepare meals in such a small area; on the road, we mostly ate out. Mother felt she would be more comfortable elsewhere, so she went to Cincinnati.

## CHAPTER 60 THE MONTGOMERY CIRCUS

We did not linger long in Houston. Now that our acts had proven themselves, we did not have to seek out the agents, they contacted us. We spent the greater part of the winter months playing the big indoor shows. I was very enthusiastic, we were off and running.

If A. W. had faults, and we all do, the one that annoyed me the most was his habit of making decisions without consulting me first. It seems that in the part of the country from which he hailed the menfolks did all of the thinking and, right or wrong, the women just tagged along. If he had been right even half of the time, I would not have taken exception.

We were playing the Police Circus in St. Louis and, at dinner between shows, he broke the news to me: he had just signed a

contract to go with the C. R. Montgomery Circus for the 1946 season.

Now that our acts were A-number one, it was time to cash in on all of the big fairs; instead, he had committed himself to an unknown would-be showman. I was appalled.

People go into the circus business in many different ways and for as many reasons. Mr. C. R. Montgomery owned a mink farm or ranch, whichever you care to call it. These little animals eat meat. Even though you have a great number of them, they are small and, when you butcher a horse or cow, there is always plenty of meat to spare. So Mr. Montgomery bought first one wild animal, then another, and still another, to feed them the meat that was left over.

So, what now? He hired an animal trainer and, thus, he had an act. An animal act belongs on a circus, so he bought some secondhand equipment and put on a show. He was able to hire a number of other gullible performers and so . . . we opened.

We wandered in and out of towns with hardly any effect on the citizens, except the few that had never been to a zoo and came to the back lot to look at the elephants. The elephants were there on lease and, after the first three payless paydays, the owner came after them and took them home, along with their trainer.

When city officials came by to talk over some sort of business with the show owner, they were always a little abashed to find him butchering and cutting up some sort of carcass to feed to his wild animals, and usually declined shaking hands.

The putting up and taking down of the big top was like an unscheduled army drill: great exercise, but serving little purpose. I am sure the original intention had been for people to enter said tent and attend the performance. Whether they did not get the message, or chose to ignore it, the fact remains that very few of them elected to go inside after the tent was up. This lack of interest had an adverse effect on the box office which carried over into the backyard, since they were unable to pay anyone a salary. All work and no pay makes a sad "Jolly," and the clowns, who hadn't been too funny to start with, ran Pagliacci a close second when it came to vocalizing their laments. The finance companies, with whom most everyone seemed to have an affiliation, were disinclined to forgive and forget either the debts or their debtors.

Not seeing a chance for things to improve in the foreseeable future, like the Arabs in the story, we quietly folded up our tents and crept away. We went back to winter quar-

ters, where we sat around waiting for Mr. Montgomery to raise the money to pay us off.

While we were waiting there, A. W. had a phone call from George Christy of the Christy Bros. Circus located in Houston. He wished to know if we would be interested in taking our unit to Hawaii for a winter date in 1947. He had been authorized to intercede on behalf of E. K. Fernandez. A. W. thought this might be interesting and quoted him a price, which was agreeable.

## CHAPTER 61 GARDEN BROS. CIRCUS

It was obvious, with the amount of animals we had and the expenses connected with them, that we were not going to be able to work just during the fair season and then lay off all winter.

I did not feel that our acts at that time were of the right caliber to try to book on the big indoor shows, therefore, I contacted Boyle



The Dorothy Herbert stock moved in this semi-trailer while playing fairs and with Garden Bros. Circus in 1947. Pfening Archives.

Woolfolk, our agent, and instructed him to try to place us on the Garden Bros. indoor show in 1947, a comparatively new unit which, I understood, was having difficulty hiring animal acts due to the restriction on taking them into Canada. We had to offer just what the Garden Brothers Circus was looking for. The only animal that could not be used was Rex; he would go along just for the ride. Garden Bros. Circus also had an elephant act, Professor Keller with his wild animal act, and Ira Watkins' famous chimps.

Upon hearing the news about our new contract, Frank Walters again stepped into the picture. He pointed out that we were going into cold country in the winter time and, although the animals would be housed in a warm building, our little house trailer, with its oil burning stove, was far from adequate for us to live in there.

Frank knew of someone who had a Spar-

ton Manor trailer for sale and took us to look at it. After the down payment was made, the papers signed, and it was fully insured, I moved everything into our new home. Compared to the little trailer, the size of a camper, it was a palace. We left the little trailer in Harold's backyard.

A. W. hired a couple of men to travel with us and take care of the stock. One of them was a truck driver. A. W. figured with the jumps we were going to be having he was going to have to have someone help him with the driving.

It so happened that A. W. was not the one to need help, however, it was me. We all ate breakfast at a roadside restaurant, but did not order the same things. Just before going into Detroit, I became very ill. I was in the lead, so the first chance I had I pulled over to the side, parked, and flagged A. W. down.

A. W. told the truck driver to take over my outfit and I got in the back seat of my car and laid down. It wasn't more than a half hour later that we had a smash up, we were hit by a huge truck. The car was not damaged, but the trailer was a total wreck. A wrecker came and towed the house trailer into a garage where we unloaded it, more or less, by just throwing everything on the back seat and floor of my car; we were running late and had to get to the border and into Canada.

A. W. and I were very thankful that it was my rig and not the horse trailer that the man had been driving--the house trailer could be replaced. From that time on, no matter what, A. W. always drove his truck himself.

The first few days on the Garden Bros. Circus we stayed in a motel and, after the insurance company settled the claim, we bought another house trailer.

Everyone on the Garden Bros. show was congenial. All of our acts worked well and were now acclimated to working either indoors or outdoors with equal ease.

## CHAPTER 62 HONOLULU

Just as we were loading the truck preparatory to leaving for Houston, who do I spy coming toward us but Jimmy. He told me where he had been all this time--in the hospital. He didn't ask if he could have a job, he knew he didn't have to.

Mr. Christy had contacted E. K. Fernandez and arranged the deal. Mr. Christy's interest was related to the fact that he was leasing his tent, sidewalls, and seats for this venture. He turned over the business of getting same to its destination to A. W.

The various performers and animals would all congregate in San Francisco, where they would disembark on two ships. The

animals and their handlers would leave on a cargo ship several days before the passenger ship carrying the performers. Most acts would, of course, make the trip to San Francisco in their own motor equipment.

Our stock would travel in the baggage car hired to transport the big top, poles, and seats. Sharing the animal section of the car would be the stock belonging to Merrit Blue, who, besides his act, had been hired as equestrian director, a position which he had held on the Christy Bros. Circus.

Merrit Blue had retired and, now that he was no longer employed, he had broke an act of his own. I am of the opinion, knowing his reputation as a trainer, that if he had just had a little more money he would have broke something more impressive. As it was, his act consisted of a pony, a dog, a goat, and a monkey.

Merrit and A. W. would go ahead to Hawaii and get everything set up there for the arrival of the stock, and also help to arrange the program.

Someone had to travel with the stock on the train to San Francisco. Since there was no one else, that left me. Merrit's wife would go by plane to San Francisco to board the ship there. Also, since Merrit did not have a groom, there was no one else in the baggage car but Jimmy. George Christy's men had loaded all of his paraphernalia the night before. As soon as they saw that the livestock was loaded, Merrit and A. W. took a taxi to the airport and from there they would go to Hawaii.

I had no premonition whatsoever of what might transpire on this journey. All expenses to San Francisco had been paid, which had included first class accommodations with a lower berth on the train for me.

The war had just ended and there was bedlam everywhere. They switched the baggage car with the stock back and forth from one train to another. Since it was booked to go passenger class rather than freight, there was a big mix up. When they finally got the car hooked up behind an engine, my reservation was no good on that train . . . it was for one that had left three hours earlier.

I found myself in a coach so crowded with servicemen that there were no seats available at all. I sat on my suitcase, and was slightly more than uncomfortable. I wondered if it was going to be like this all of the way to San Francisco.

They gave the call for dinner and I got in line, along with a few other civilians, only to be informed that meals were being served to servicemen only. The man in charge said that when we got to the next station we could get off and buy sandwiches and coffee.

I did not mind so much for myself, but what about poor Jimmy up ahead in the stock car with nothing to eat. We had loaded up that morning at five o'clock, and it was now after dark.

After all of the servicemen had been fed and the diner was closed, I walked up and knocked. When a man opened the door, I explained that I did not wish anything to eat for myself, but that I had a man up ahead in a car just behind the engine that would be needing food.



Dorothy on the E. K. Fernandez Circus in Honolulu, Hawaii during the winter of 1946-1947. Kent Ghirard photo.

"Lady," he replied, "the only man who would be riding in a baggage car up ahead would be a stiff, and he would not be needing any food."

I told him that the man was riding in the car with some horses. I was sure from the way that he looked at me that he thought I was "cracked." Horses on a passenger train? He did, however, tell me to go and sit in a corner of the diner. At least I now had a seat, which was far better than my perch on my suitcase.

At the next stop, about an hour later, he came over to where I was seated and said, "Now, young lady, let's you and me go and visit your mysterious stranger up ahead. It will be interesting to hear what he has to say."

The moment he flashed his light into the baggage car, Jimmy rose up and said, "Miss Herbert, I am awfully hungry."

We went back to the diner and the steward told one of his men to see that the man up ahead with the horses had plenty to eat. I asked him what I owed and he said, "It's on the house." I thanked him, picked up my suitcase and started to go.

"One question before we part," he inter-

posed. "I would like to know how long it has been since you have last eaten."

I told him since that morning, but it did not matter.

He told me to sit down and went back to the kitchen and talked to his chef. A little while later I was wolfing down a delicious meal.

I again offered to pay, but he would not hear of it. He was eager to hear all about circus business and wondered why we would be on a train traveling like this. We sat up most of the night talking and drinking coffee, and when I fell asleep in the easy chair in which I was sitting, he did not disturb me.

We arrived in San Francisco, the passenger train pulled into the station and everyone started getting off. As I was standing on the platform with my suitcase, I saw that they had uncoupled the coaches from the baggage car and the engineer was about to go elsewhere. I grabbed my suitcase and ran as fast as I could and asked the engineer where he was going. He told me that he was going to the stockpen with the animals aboard, so that they could be unloaded.

"But how will I get there?" I asked. "I have to go along."

"No way, lady, it ain't allowed," he replied.

I began to cry and said, "The man in the car with all that stock will not be able to handle the situation by himself."

He climbed from the engine and went to the baggage car and had a few words with Jimmy. That was enough to convince him that Jimmy would not have the faintest idea of what to do when he got there unless there was someone to tell him.

When he came back, he said, "O. K., come on up here," and I rode in style to the stockyards in the cab of the train.

Once there, Jimmy and I unloaded and, while he fed and watered the stock and dogs, I went to the phone to find out about the ship. I was informed that the elephants and the rest of the livestock had already been loaded; we were the last to arrive. A truck was waiting and would pick up the big top, props, and dog cages, but I would have to make my own arrangement in regards to getting the horses and ponies there. I asked them to have the other horse people there send along a couple of their men on the truck to help me ride and lead horses.

It was a long way from the stockyards to the freighter loading docks, and I was glad there was plenty of help because Jimmy and I were both exhausted. As soon as everything was loaded and Jimmy safely aboard, I took a cab to the hotel to await the ship that would take the performers.

Mr. Fernandez had hired an impressive array of talent: the Wallenda's high wire act; three rings of liberty horse acts; the Flying LaForms; Dolly Jacobs' elephants; Landon's

Midgets; Manuel Verlarde and Phil Escalante on the wires; three rings of foot jugglers; three rings of trampoline acts; aerial ballet featuring Marilyn Rich and a number of girls on the webs; Escalante brothers; Frank Doyle, heel and toe catch without a net; three rings of ponies; three rings of trained dogs; a monkey act; a host of clowns, and many, many more. Since some of these troupes were quite large, it meant many people had to be accommodated.

When one thinks of going to Hawaii, one envisions a trip which they will remember always. I assure you, this was one that will be remembered not only by myself, but by everyone else that made that fateful voyage.

This trip took place after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent war that resulted. Peace had now been declared. The people on the Islands had been without entertainment for a long time. E. K. Fernandez was anxious to supply them with amusement, posthaste.

The ship on which passage had been booked to carry the performers had been used, up until now, as an Army transport ship. There had not yet been time to convert it back to the status of a passenger liner, so it was completely devoid of any of the things one might expect when taking a pleasure cruise.

One section had been designated for ladies, and another for the men. Married couples would be together during the day, but not at night. Steel cots, three high, with wire springs (and mattresses so thin you could feel each one of them) were covered with sheets and two Army blankets each.

Small tables and chairs were grouped around in the lounge rooms and decks of cards were supplied. No other entertainment was offered.

There were a few other travelers beside our troop but, for the most part, the rest of the passengers consisted of a band of gypsies who had fled to the States for safety and, now that the war was over, were returning to the Islands where they had formed some sort of settlement.

Each of us had been given a key and issued a locker in which to place our belongings; along with a warning to keep everything we owned put away and locked. A warning best heeded.

The gypsies were housed on another deck and had been told that our deck was off limits to them. They were served their meals at a different time than we were.

Each morning after our bunks had been made up, a towel and a small cake of soap would be placed at the foot of it. During the time that we were having our breakfast, the gypsies would send their youngsters to our deck to pick up anything that wasn't nailed down. Since this was mostly the decks of cards and the cakes of soap, the captain found it necessary to lock up the playing cards until someone asked for them, and we

were handed a cake of soap as we left the dining room.

As luck would have it, we ran into bad weather most all of the way over and, as the ship did not have the proper ballast, we had a rather rough time of it. Many of the women-folk became ill and spent most of the trip in their uncomfortable bunks.

Of all who made the trip, Dolly Jacobs perhaps saw the worst of it. Punch and Judy, her twins, came down with the measles, contracted from the gypsy kids. One of the ship's officers was rousted from his compartment, and there she was confined, with the twins, throughout the trip.



Another photo of Dorothy Herbert on the Fernandez show in Hawaii. Kent Ghirard photo.

Upon our arrival we were given a royal Hawaiian welcome. Everywhere we went the people were friendly and jolly. We opened in Honolulu, and then went on to the smaller islands. Since this was the first circus to play there since the war, the people were hungry for entertainment. We found it necessary to give three shows a day.

The only way that we could be reached by phone was at night in our hotel; thus, one night we were awakened by a phone call from Clyde Beatty.

He now had his own show and wanted to know if we would join him; he and A.W. talked for quite some time. There was one drawback: he could not use the liberty horse act, he had three liberty horse acts of his own which he had just bought, along with the other show equipment. The ponies and the rest of our stock, including the dog act, he had room for. A. W. told him he would let him

know as soon as possible what might be worked out. The prospect of again being with a railroad show was enticing, no more all night drives overland, and then work all day.

As fate would have it, things worked out much faster than we had any idea they would. The very next day, A.W. was talking to Dale Petroff in the men's dressing room about Clyde's call.

Dale turned to him and asked, "I don't suppose there is any chance that you would consider selling the liberty act, is there? I would sure like to own it."

A. W. talked it over with me, I agreed, and he quoted Dale a price. That night, after the show, he returned Clyde's call and they made a deal for the coming season. As soon as the Hawaii dates were over, A. W. would have to take a plane to Shreveport, Louisiana, and practice the liberty act he would be working and, along with Johnny Cline, get the girl riders in shape for the manege act.

I would stay with our stock and turn over the liberty horse act to Dale Petroff when we landed stateside. A baggage car would be ordered to take the rest of our stock and the dogs to Shreveport.

## CHAPTER 63 A SLIGHT DELAY

Sounds easy, huh? Only it didn't work out that way. The show in Hawaii did close, A. W. did get on a plane, and he did arrive in Shreveport. Period!

We had played all of the smaller islands and were now back in Honolulu waiting for the freighter that would take the livestock back to the mainland. As soon as everything was loaded and on its way, other than the men who were making the trip with the animals, the rest of us would make the return journey by plane. The boat arrived on time, but they would not let the livestock on it. They accepted the tent and all of the props, trunks, etc., and the riggings belonging to the performers; but they were transporting sugar and it was against the law to carry animals at the same time they were transporting foodstuff. The next boat would sail from there two weeks later.

Everyone was worried because we would now be short of feed for the horses and elephants. We had just enough for the boat trip home on hand; none was available on the islands, but Mr. Fernandez assured us he would have some flown in from the mainland.

Now, about the dogs which were sitting in their cages on the docks. When in Hawaii, the dogs were kept in quarantine the whole time that they were there, except when they were performing. Now they had to be sent back to the kennels.

Mr. Fernandez had rented a building for the livestock and, after seeing that all of the

animals were taken care of, all of us went back to town and checked into the hotel.

At long last the freighter arrived. The place where all of the stock was being kept was quite some distance from the docks. The stock would have to be either ridden or led to the loading place, and it made quite a display going down the road. The horses, ponies, and Kitchens' mules in the lead, and Dolly Jacobs' elephants close behind.

About midway to the docks, one of the little railroad cars which they use over there came passing by; the engineer gave a friendly little "Toot, toot" with his whistle, and that was all she wrote: off dashed Dolly Jacobs' elephants, trunks and tails in the air. They were captured after a merry chase, and, so, onward to the docks.

Now, another fine kettle of fish. This boat was not equipped with a loading ramp; the animals were to be put in crates and hoisted aboard. Some of the horses would walk into the crates, others would not. Blue, Kitchen, Petroff, and the grooms got the job done at last. The elephants were put in slings of some sort and hoisted aboard. The final blow . . . no dogs were allowed on board.

The following day Mr. Fernandez made arrangements for the dogs and monkeys to be put in crates and be returned home in the baggage compartment of the plane. I was advised that it would be very cold there, so I took a cab to an army surplus store and bought a lot of blankets to cover the dogs.

We arrived in San Francisco a week ahead of the freighter. I said goodbye to those who had been on the same plane with me and checked my baggage. I then hired a truck and loaded up the dog crates, hired a cab to follow it, and had the dogs taken to the railroad yards, expecting to house them in a railroad car that was to take them to Shreveport. Of course, I should have known better, but I just wasn't thinking straight. When this proved to be impossible, I just did not know what to do.

I went from one person to another, pleading. The driver of the truck started to raise Cain, he wanted to unload and leave. I do not know who, or how, but some kind soul arranged for me to rent an empty storeroom for the dogs.

After seeing to all of their needs, I checked into a nearby hotel, then took a taxi back to the airport and picked up my baggage. By the time I returned to the hotel, I was very tired and retired to a fitful sleep. I spent most of the next week taking care of the dogs.

By this time, it was too late to join the Beatty show in Shreveport. I was advised by phone to go to San Diego, California, and

wait for the show there. The boat carrying the stock finally arrived and I was waiting at the docks to meet them. I turned the liberty horses and their trappings over to Dale Petroff, and hired a truck to take the rest of our trunks and props to the freight yards. We then had to lead the horses and ponies from the docks to the freight yards, which was no small chore in a city like San Francisco, especially since Jimmy and I were the only ones around to do it. I was sure glad that Mr. Petroff had taken over the liberty horses at the docks.

After arriving at the freight yard, I went in to make the necessary arrangements. The baggage car had been hired to take the stock to Shreveport, and I could not seem to make anyone understand that I did not wish to go there. Also, since we had not taken occupancy of the baggage car when it was ordered,



Dorothy and two of her ponies on the Clyde Beatty show in 1948, her first season on that show. Pfening Archives.

there was now demurrage due on it. I asked them why they had made me hire a building for the dogs if a baggage car was being paid for? No one bothered to answer that one.

The Beatty show was contacted and the railway agent had several long discussions with Mr. Beatty's manager. Other phone calls were made and, after what seemed like a very long interval, I was told that the baggage car would now go to San Diego. Jimmy and I got everything loaded at last, quite a job in itself, considering the dogs, the props, and the horses were in two different places. I breathed a sigh of relief. It was short-lived, however, for when I went back to the railroad office to check on the time of departure, I found that this time the baggage car would not be hooked to a passenger train, but to a freight train scheduled to leave in two hours.

There was no passenger train out of there to San Diego until noon the next day, so now the stock would arrive in a strange town, and

poor Jimmy would have no idea at all of what to do, where to go, or how to make any arrangements.

I told Jimmy to not move from the stock car for anything. I gave him the money to pay for the hay I had ordered, and I hailed a cab and dashed to the hotel and checked out. On the return trip, I had the driver wait while I ran into a grocery store and bought a lot of food and assorted drinks.

Upon arriving back at the train, I handed Jimmy all of the foodstuff and then, after making certain that no one was about, I gave Jimmy my suitcases and told him to hide them, after which I climbed into the car and disappeared behind the stacked-up hay. I felt like a lady hobo, and I won't say I wasn't scared I had no idea what might happen if the brakeman were to discover my presence.

It was a godsend that I went along because, when we got to San Diego, we had no idea of where to go or how to get there, but I, at least, would be able to ask questions. In any given situation, Jimmy would have just sat there and waited until someone came along and told him what to do.

I had figured there would be some sort of stockpen where we would unload but, no, the motor-man just shunted us off onto a side track, uncoupled his engine, and left us. Luckily there was a little settlement within walking distance. I told Jimmy to sit tight, and headed for the settlement. I asked around and was told that I might be able to rent some stalls at the polo grounds. I phoned them, and they said they could put us up. I then asked if they knew someone who I could get to haul the stock and also transport the dog cages, trunks and props. After what seemed like hours (and it probably was) I got the animals and Jimmy settled at the polo grounds, and I took a cab and went to the hotel.

A hot bath and a couple of cups of coffee made me feel a little better. I then called the police station in the town where I knew the Beatty show was playing that day, and asked if they would see that a message got to the showgrounds informing them of where I was staying, in case they might wish to get in touch with me.

A. W. called late that night. "We will be there day after tomorrow," he told me. "Be sure to have everything cleaned up and looking right, I would like to make a good impression."

I told him that everything was filthy dirty, nothing had been groomed for days; there was just Jimmy and me, and it was an impossible job.

He said, "Well, get somebody to help." I wondered how, way out there on the polo field.

I took a cab to the polo grounds early in the morning and Jimmy and I started bathing the horses. I could see that we were never going to get the whole job done. About that time, a group of youngsters came by and were admiring the ponies. I asked one of the biggest boys if he would like to bathe one of them and he said, "Gee, sure." Another of the boys asked if he might wash one, also. The girls thought this looked like it might be fun and asked if they might join in. I told them that it was men's work but, if they liked, they could help me with the dogs. I turned the boys over to Jimmy for instructions, and the girls and I went to work bathing the dogs.

All of the youngsters had bikes so, at noon time, I sent a couple of them to pick up some sandwiches and cold drinks and we had a party of sorts. There was no time to do any painting, but we did get the props washed off and by evening everything was shipshape-- except me, I was bushed.

The show arrived the next day and A. W. took charge. When I began to tell him my long tale of woe, he laughed before I could get started and said, "I don't know why it is, but you always seem to have so many little troubles." Somehow I thought that was an understatement.

I told him to see to it that all of the kids who had helped me got in to see the show. I need not have bothered, they went right along to the show grounds with the animals and were part of the show itself; helping with the trappings, feeding, etc. A.W. took them to the cookhouse for dinner between shows, and they got a big kick out of that.

When I fell into bed that night after giving two shows, I thought, now I can sleep until noon tomorrow. Just as I was about to doze off, A. W. said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you, you have an eight o'clock broadcast tomorrow morning." I was back with the circus again.

#### CHAPTER 64 CLYDE BEATTY CIRCUS

Some of my girlfriends from both the Cole Bros. Circus and the Ringling show were on the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1948, and after we had been on the road for a few weeks, they asked me to form another club, it had been so much fun in the past. But all of that was over, I could not do it; I just did not have the time.

While in Shreveport, Clyde and A. W. had figured out that a pony ride would be an asset to the show; also a means of making extra money. A. W. had a sweep made and had bought saddles. Our ponies were broke to ride and when I would arrive on the lot after the morning broadcast, we would open up. This meant quite a lot of extra work, since either A. W. or I had to be there at all times, along with the assistance of a groom. A. W. would go to the cookhouse first, and



Dorothy posed with a tiger for a publicity photo on Ringling-Barnum in 1935. She did not work a wild animal act on that show. Circus World Museum collection.

upon his return, I would go. There was no time left for extra activities and, since I had to get to the lot as quickly as possible after my daily broadcast, I would not have had time to do the shopping for club members anyway.

I did nothing out of the ordinary that first year, the 1948 season. I worked my ponies in their drill; drove the white stallion on the long reins as a special display in center ring; rode my palomino stallion in the high school number, and ended it riding King Kong for the waltz and rear; and, of course, did the high fire jump with Rex. I worked my dog act, and if A. W. was busy elsewhere, I would sometimes jump in and work the riding dog and monkey act, which, along with another act in the other end ring, was used to kill time and entertain the people while Clyde's steel arena was being taken down. With the radio show each morning and the pony ride before and after the show, I managed to keep busy.

When the season was over, the show went into El Monte, California, for the winter. We rented an apartment and I looked forward to having a little time off with nothing to do but rest. Suddenly there was a wave of excitement all over winter quarters--Clyde had booked all of his acts to play the dates for E. K. Fernandez in Hawaii; only this time the performers were to make the trip on the luxury liner, Lurline. What a thrill!

Just a week before we were due to leave, A. W. came into the apartment and said, "I'm afraid that I have a little disappointment for you, you will not be going to the Islands with us."

I began to cry. I had been packing for days. "But, why? Why was I being left behind?"

A. W. then told me that they had been discussing the Beatty program for the coming season, and they had decided that I ought to

have a bigger dog act. I had nine dogs in the act, but Clyde thought I should have a more impressive display, say fifteen or so.

Tearfully, I went to watch the show leave for Hawaii on that beautiful boat. The next day I paid a visit to the local dog pound, picked out a batch of mutts, and went to work.

Upon their return from Hawaii, everyone was bubbling over with stories about the great times they had while there. Since Clyde refused to work his act more than twice in any given day, all performances had been limited to two a day. There had been all sorts of parties and entertainment for them. I turned a deaf ear, I did not want to hear about it. I now had a big dog act, and it was good. Clyde and A. W. were both very pleased, but the results left me cold.

Some of the performers on this newly-formed circus had formerly been with truck shows and, being accustomed to the extra luxuries of a home on wheels, had disdained riding the circus train. Now that gas coupons were no longer necessary, they made the tour with their house trailers.

Our one big problem had been with the dogs. They were transported in a cage wagon, each having their own compartment, and this was loaded on the flat cars. On mornings when the train arrived in town early, there was no difficulty; as soon as the wagon was unloaded the dogs were allowed to "go out." At other times, when the train was late getting into town, since it took quite some time to get the flats unloaded, it was necessary to climb up onto the flats and lift the dogs down to the ground so they could answer the call of nature, and then we had to put them back up. There was a man assigned to feed, water and care for the dogs, but it was quite impossible for one person to jump up and down from the train with each dog, therefore we would be called upon to help.

Johnny and Molungia Cline, who also had a dog act, bought a truck and house trailer and were going to travel overland. With as many dogs as we had, A. W. thought that that was an excellent idea; so he took a plane to Houston, where our house trailer was in storage, bought a truck in which the dogs would be transported, attached the trailer, and came back to winter quarters.

We and the Clines stuck close together while traveling overland, stopped at the same roadside restaurants so that we could dine together, and formed a close friendship which lasted throughout the years.

Nothing untoward happened all season, yet I was looking forward to a few days leisure when the season came to an end. Not, however, as many as were in the cards.

## CHAPTER 65 BIG CATS

We must go back to the time that I was with the Ringling Bros. Circus in order to understand what led up to the events that were now to happen.

The executives of the Ringling Bros. Circus and Clyde Beatty, who was working for them at the time, were having some sort of disagreement. Just before the show closed, I was informed that I was to remain in winter quarters at the end of the season and learn to work a wild animal act. John Helliot was given the thankless job of teaching me. He was a wonderful teacher, but I was not very keen on the idea and I am afraid I was not a very good pupil.

Noted for being willing to try most anything, my bosses could not understand why I was not enthusiastic about this idea, which they thought was so sensational.

Sam Gumpertz was negotiating with someone in Europe to buy an animal act which he had seen on his last trip over there. He offered to send me there to look the act over, but I declined. In the first place, I was doing so many numbers in the show I felt that I was doing about all that I could handle. Then, too, I knew that I was being used as a threat against someone that I greatly admired and respected.

One day, the animal trainer mentioned to one of the bosses that, due to the fact that I worked so much with horses I was bound to carry the scent on me and, since wild animals eat horse meat, it would be especially dangerous for me to work with them. Whether this was true or not, or just a ploy to get rid of me, I do not know. Personally, I doubted it; anyway, it worked. When told about it, I drew a breath of relief. I was in the show six different times, plus, by now, I was handling all of the radio work as well.

Before A. W. left to go on the tour, we arranged with the caretaker on Gene Autry's ranch that one evening each week I would go to his cottage at a certain time and A. W. would phone me there. Then, one day the caretaker's wife came by and told me that I had just had a call and the party had said they would call back in an hour. I imagined all sorts of things, else why would I be called at this hour?

When the phone rang, I picked it up with a shaky hand. It was Clyde Beatty. Harriet Beatty had passed away just before the closing of the show. Clyde, grief stricken, had gone back to their home in Florida for the winter; now it was spring and time to get back to the business of living. He was desperately in need of someone to work her act; it was very important that it be in the show.

It followed a couple of acts after the opening *spec*, there would be two more numbers in each end ring, after which they would announce Clyde Beatty himself.

I didn't say I would think it over, from experience I knew one did not do business with Clyde that way. Rather, I said, "I have animals here for which arrangements will have to be made. It will be necessary to find someone to take care of them."

Clyde agreed, and advised he would be willing to compensate someone to do so. Next day, I made a deal with the caretaker's son, who always seemed to be having trouble making ends meet, to care for the dogs, see



Dorothy working the Harriett Beatty tiger riding elephant act during the 1950 season. Author's collection.

that no one walked off with the trailer, and give the ponies and Rex their little treats. Then I called A. W. at the hotel in Boston, where I knew he was staying, and told him I was running away to join a circus. He asked which one, but forgot to ask what I was going to do when I got there.

I was glad for the chance to get away for a while. I packed what I thought I would need, and hired the caretaker's son to drive me to Los Angeles. When we arrived there, I found that there would only be time for one rehearsal before the matinee.

In this modern age, when a hoop of fire is used, it is a round loop with perforations, a long hose connected to a butane tank is attached to it and it can be turned on and off just like a stove. In the period of which I am speaking, they used to wrap the fire hoop with sacks soaked in gasoline. The fire was put out by dousing it with water. Clyde told me that we would practice the act without

lighting the fire, so it would be all set for the first show.

The act consisted of two Bengal tigers riding and performing on the back of an Indian elephant. They did a number of tricks, then finished with Prema, a huge tiger, jumping onto and off of the elephant through a hoop of fire.

In all of the years that his wife worked this act, Clyde has always stood just outside of the cage, he would now do the same for me. He was a few seconds late during the first show, so I did not see him until I was already inside the arena. I noticed that, instead of standing outside, he was in the safety cage, gripping the bars with both hands. I began to get nervous. When I picked up the match to light the fire hoop, I looked up and Prema's eyes looked like two, big green flashlights.

It suddenly occurred to me that my jumping horses, Rex and Satan, always jumped the moment they saw the fire and I wondered if this cat would do the same. I did not know which way to jump. She just sat and looked, and I looked back at her; then I heard Clyde yell, "Light the fire and get behind her." Then I remembered the cue.

When I left the cage, Clyde grabbed me in his arms, I thought to congratulate me, but no, instead he shook me and said, "Don't you ever wear feathers in that arena again." I had worn what I thought was one of my best looking costumes, complete with a fancy feather headdress. "Cats," said Clyde, "catch birds, you know, whether they are house cats or big ones."

When talking to Clyde on the phone, I had thought that I would be with them for the Los Angeles engagement only, until they could find someone else.

George Smith, who had been the assistant manager when I was with the Ringling Bros. show, and whom I had revered from afar, was now Clyde's manager. It took very little persuasion from him to convince me that I was just wasting my life away sitting on a hill top and working as a dog boy.

I had never, ever, had such an easy season. Other than Harriet's act, all I had to do was the radio show each morning. Television was now becoming quite the thing. Clyde thought that it would be good publicity for me to carry a wild animal of some sort with me. He bought an ocelot for me to take to the TV shows. We called her Maria Christina; why, I don't know.

By the time that his year contract with Gene Autry was up, A. W. was ready to join me the following season on the Clyde Beatty show. I do not know what it was that he was hunting for when he went to work for Gene Autry; whatever it was, he never found it.

While still at the Autry ranch, A. W. had bought a pretty, white stallion to replace the one that had died. In the evenings, after he

was finished training Gene's horses, he had broke it to work on the long reins. He also brought with him, of course, the ponies, dogs, monkeys, and Rex.

Things were going well, I thought; I was working Harriet's tiger and elephant act, my white stallion on the long reins during the high school number, the dog act, and Rex in the high jump closing the show. The pony ride was doing well, we were saving money, and we were having a little fun.

Several of the other performers were traveling overland with their house trailers. Johnny and Molungia Cline, Con and Winnie Colleano, and A. W. and I always traveled together and stopped and had our meals together at the same restaurants.

I recall our trip through Canada. We were booked to play Victoria Island for ten days; everything would be loaded onto boats for the crossing. We were permitted to take our trucks or cars, but the trailers would have to be left behind.

After the boat trip, while the rest of us were busy with our stock, Winnie Colleano, the wife of the forever-famous wire walker, made the rounds. She came back and told us that the rates in the hotels, this being tourist season, were out of the question. She had inquired around and found that here, the same as in her native England, some of the people took in paying guests. This idea would never have occurred to any of the rest of us, mainly because we had never heard of it.

Because Johnnie and A. W. were rather tied down, their trucks being loaded up with dogs, Winnie suggested that she, with a car, would find lodgings for all of us. We were very grateful. After the animals were all taken care of that night, Winnie drove us to a private home.

Hilda, a real cockney from the word go, met us at the door. A hostess such as she very few have ever met, unless it was our boys in uniform, who, she told me, she had made it her business to entertain while back home in Dear Old England.

When we came in each evening after the night show, she would have a nice lunch waiting for us. But, best of all, she would entertain us all the time we were dining by singing funny songs and telling jokes. We were sorry when it came time to leave.

The season came to an end. I was looking forward to a little time off before starting to get things in order for the following year. I had all kinds of plans for new wardrobe. Clyde had told me that I would be working the riding tiger act with him that winter on all of the big indoor shows. Nothing else, just the one act; another paid vacation.

#### CHAPTER 66 KING BROS. CIRCUS

For the 1954 season A. W. and I cast our lot with Floyd King's truck show. This turned out to be an interesting experience.



Milt Herriott, Dorothy and Johnny Herriott on King Bros. Circus in 1954. Author's collection.

Floyd and Howard King each had a predominate passion. With Floyd, the most important thing in the world seemed to be getting the street parade underway on time. On a truck show, this was a hazardous undertaking no matter how you looked at it. The odds of all of the trucks and equipment getting to town, unloaded, hitched up, and ready to roll by 10:00 a.m. were all against it. It had been too big of a hassle for the railroad shows, which arrived in a town all at the same time; that is why they abolished street parades in the first place. Now, here is this man, with his equipment strung from one town to the next, valiantly striving to renew one of the glorious traditions of the past and, by cracky, doing it, one way or another.

Of course, it was not always the same parade in each town, something or other would often be missing; but, a parade there was, rain or shine. Giving a street parade daily did not endear him to the performers, of course. Upon returning to the lot and eating a hasty meal in the dining tent, it was usually time for the matinee.

Howard King was engrossed with only one thing--his "Ding Show." I had never heard of one, so I will assume that some of my readers may not have either. A tent was erected at the most advantageous spot on the midway and, unlike the sideshow which was usually across from it, would open up to the public as soon as the displays were set up in it, rather than waiting until the townspeople began to assemble. Once opened, it contin-

ued to run until teardown time. Banners across the front proclaimed, "Wonders From All Over The World." At the entrance was a sign which read, "All Free, Everyone Welcome."

Cages set on platforms lined each side with various small animals enclosed and signs explaining what they were and where they were from, etc. A canvas side-wall ran down the center and almost to the far end where you turned and walked down the other side, again lined with cages.

As you came to the exit, an elderly man attired in a veterans' uniform explained, with a constant flow of patter, that the exhibit was wholly dependent for its existence on the contributions made by kindhearted animal lovers. So eloquent was his spiel that few passed by without giving a donation. It was a money-making proposition, and it required just about all of Howard King's attention; it was always the first thing up and the last thing down on the lot.

So, with Floyd's attention focused on the parade, and Howard's on the "Ding Show," the big top show pretty much ran itself; with one exception--Floyd always showed up for the closing number, which was the races. The finish race consisted of Shetland ponies on which were tied an assortment of monkeys, holding on for dear life and usually screaming at the top of their lungs. There was a large bell alongside the band stand which Floyd kept ringing all of the time the race was on.

The parade had not concerned me as I was, as usual, doing the radio broadcasts for the show each morning in town; but they knew that A. W. was able to drive most any kind of team, and he was constantly being called upon to do so. This, after driving his truck and seeing that our stock was attended to, was a bit too much; consequently, when asked to return for another season, he declined.

Frank Walters had located a nice barn for us in Houston, so that is where we planned to winter. We had all new wardrobe made, painted all of our props, and broke one of the palomino stallions, that had been doing manege, to the bit and spur and put a few more tricks on him. He was very adaptable and responded quickly.

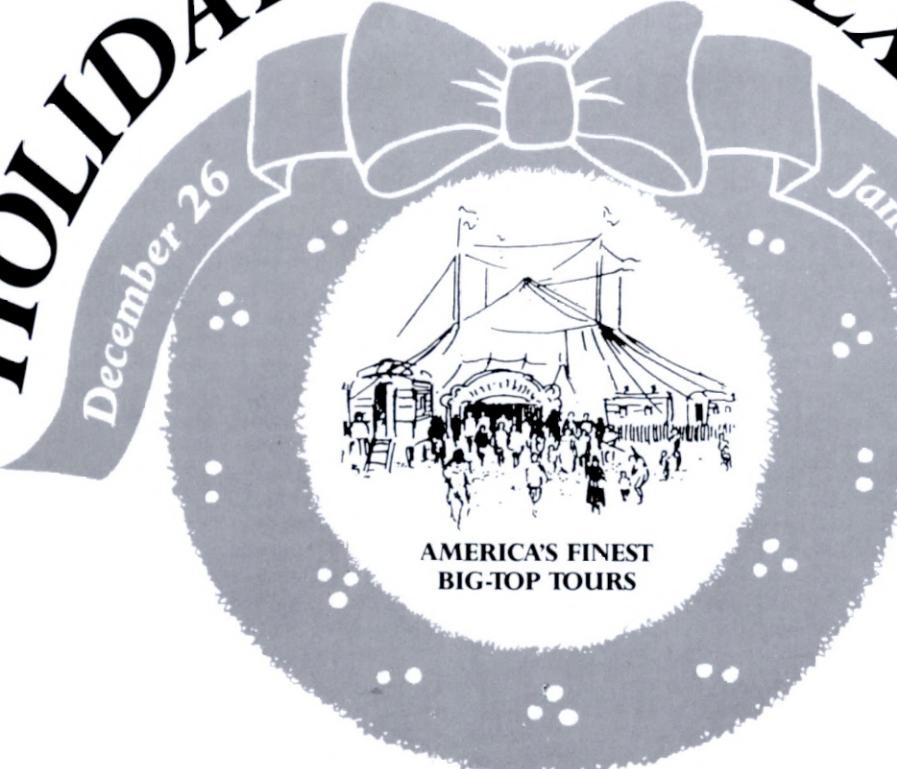
Black Hawk had been getting out of hand. A mean stallion to start with, as he got older he became cranky and was a constant troublemaker around other horses--kicking and biting and rearing when he was not supposed to. On fairs, it hadn't made too much difference, as we worked alone, but when on a show with other riders in the same number, you had to keep warning them lest they might be kicked. We decided to sell him to a breeder and I rode Golden Arrow.



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Chapter 6 Part Three

Chapter 6 Part Three

# ONLY BIG SHOW COMING

By Orin C. King

## A Grand Autochthonic Collection

1884

**F**orepaugh played Atchison July 28, but Barnum was watching and tried to weaken Forepaugh's drawing power by announcing in the *Patriot* of July 26 that the "Great Barnum & London Union" was coming to Atchison, positively, September 30. The success of "wait" campaigns is always questionable, and asking people to forego a pleasure for two months is ludicrous, but the Barnum-London aggregation apparently could well afford the expense of belittling a competitor by self-inflation. The greatest touch of arrogance was ignoring the coming of the enemy and by not mentioning his name.

All America recognized the untouched greatness of the Barnum-London show, and people who could not name the president of the United States were familiar with the name of Barnum. Barnum was household name; nothing was bigger than Barnum. In the entertainment world Barnum was a brand name unexcelled, himself a feature, and *The Greatest Show on Earth* was a benefit to all.

All the Atchison papers failed to make any report after the show had gone. Barnum-London played Leavenworth October 1, and Topeka on October 2.

On July 22, the Topeka campaign began on July 22, when Charles Stow was in town making arrangements for the exhibitions to come. Forepaugh scheduled Topeka for July 30, and, as in Atchison, the Barnum-London aggregation ran a story ahead of Forepaugh's date in an attempt to reduce his audience, but nothing was gained by the maneuver, for a crowd estimated between 10,000 and 12,000 took in the Forepaugh show.

The first newspaper ads for Barnum-London appeared September 18, and in the ensuing days the *North Topeka Mail* ran two ads; the *Commonwealth*, four; the *Capital*, five and the *Journal* twelve.

Advertisements mentioned by name only three performers, Chang, the Chinese Giant; Major Atom, the Elfin Man; and Admiral Dot, "Midget, Actor and Dude." In a hand-out containing a "quote" from the New York *Times* appear the Davenport brothers and Mme. Watson, chairoiteer. No other performers were named out of the 200 claimed.

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On September 18 the *Commonwealth* noted the presence of W. W. Durand, press agent, and the next day the *Journal* announced the arrival of B. H. Grover. Both men registered at Allen Sells' hotel, the Windsor.

The *Journal* reported on October 1 that, "Mr. R. H. King, an advance manager of the



Union Pacific and transferred to the Santa Fe on the other side of the river, unloaded at the Eighth street crossing, because of the considerably shorter haul to the lot.

The Windsor Hotel received 108 of the circus people, the most visible being Chang, the Chinese Giant.

Reviews published in the *Capital* and the *Journal* were obviously the work of the Barnum-London press department, and only the *Commonwealth* thought for itself: "At a very early hour yesterday morning Kansas avenue began to be lined with multitudes of people, all eagerly bent upon one desired object--that of seeing the 'great moral show' make its street parade, which had been advertised to take place at 8:30 o'clock. Hour after hour blew by, and it was long past the appointed time, but the people waited patiently about, and they were more than well pleased. At 12 o'clock the magnificent spectacle made its appearance at Fifth street, and from there moved South through a perfect sea of gazing, excited humanity, to the show grounds. It was grand, it was gorgeous, it was enthusiastic, it was splendid, it was fine, and everybody said it was unquestionably the best street parade they ever saw."

By the time Barnum-London made their parade, Topeka had seen the parades of W. W. Cole, John B. Doris, Adam Forepaugh, and the Sells Brothers, and were certainly in a position to make comparisons; and if they thought Barnum's "was unquestionably the best street parade they ever saw," the opinion was based on knowledge.

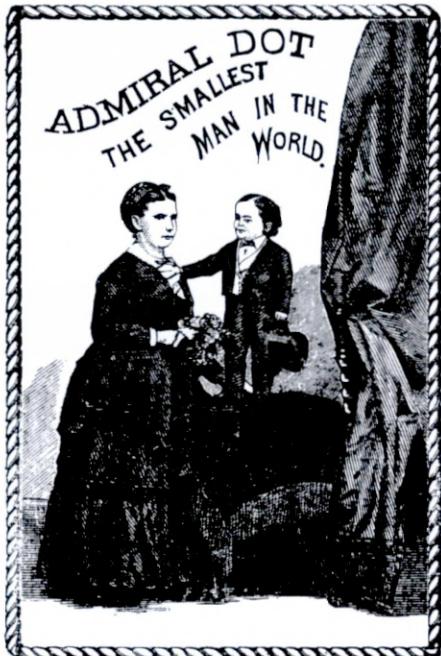
"Immense crowds attended both the afternoon and evening performances. Jumbo was the first and principal attraction."

Cover of an eight page Barnum courier used in opposition stands with the Forepaugh show during the 1884 season. Pfening Archives.

Barnum shows, has been in the city selecting a location for the show tomorrow. As the old grounds usually used down near the Santa Fe depot were covered with water, he selected a site at the corner of Topeka avenue and Fourteenth street."

They arrived from Leavenworth on the

The *Commonwealth* gushed along mentioning wonders, but gave no details. The story ended with, "Finally, a word remains to be said for the fine appearance of everything connected with the great moral show. The costumes are rich and new, and positively elegant—not the tawdry, bespangled coverings of the average circus, but dresses that might be shown with fine effect upon the stage of



#### Price 5 Cents.

Admiral Dot was a feature in the Barnum & London side show when it appeared in Kansas in 1884. Pfening Archives.

any first-class theater. All in all it is indeed a great moral show."

An important reason for the success of the Barnum-London shows was illustrated in the following paragraph which appeared in a separate column of the *Commonwealth*: "There is a gentleman in this country who has more friends among newspaper reporters than any other man above ground. They all love him without fear or favor, without regard to political belief or present servitude. D. S. Thomas, press agent with the 'greatest show on earth' is this man. When he comes to town the boys have a picnic. They get to ride in the finest carriages, smoke the best cigars and see everything that belongs to Hon. P. T. Barnum's wonderful enterprise then set through a performance, like the crowned heads of Europe, in a section of the reserved seat row entirely separate from anybody else. Mr. Thomas has been with Barnum ten years, and is unquestionably 'one of the finest.'"

\*\*\*\*\*

The big, bigger and biggest played Topeka in 1884, but also Topeka in 1884, was the smallest of the small, described by the North Topeka *Mail* of August 15: "A show comprised of a man, a wolf, a wagon and two horses, from Valley Falls, was arrested here on Friday. The consolidated aggregation of three allied shows under one canvas (the wagon cover) had failed to follow the route

marked out by its proprietor, John Price, of Valley Falls, and he sent a telegram here to arrest the man. Things were settled satisfactorily and the stupendous conglomeration moved on."

\*\*\*\*\*

For as long as he lived, it is quite certain that Miles Orton never forgot his Kansas tour of 1884. Orton's Anglo-American Circus, Royal German Menagerie, le Grand Circo Zoologico and Mystic Circus of Japan played, among others, the following towns: August 8, Girard; August 9, Yates Center; August 11, El Dorado; August 13, Eureka; August 14, Iola; August 15, Garnett; August 16, Council Grove; August 18, Junction City; August 20, Minneapolis; August 21, McPherson; August 23, Hays, Colorado (Matinee only); September 18, Osborne; September 19, Burr Oak; September 20, Washington; September 29, Oswego; September 30, Columbus; October 1, Pittsburg. "The biggest and Best of Them All!"--which, of course, could only be Orton's Anglo-American 4 SHOWS--announced in the Girard *Press* that it would "positively exhibit at Girard on Friday, August 8, '84, NO SOONER! NO LATER!"

"Travels by its own special train of Palace Cars. Everything new and bright. The model show of the world. Do not fail to come in town early and see the Grand and Glorious Street Parade. A Solid Mile of Golden Glitter. 31 MASSIVE DENS OF BRUTE BEASTS! The whole world contributing."

Among the advertised features, were "5 Open Dens in Street Parade, 12 Famous Equestrians, 7 World-Renowned Lady Riders, 5 Famous Clowns, Performing Lions, Performing Hyenas, Performing Leopards, Performing Camels."

The greatest of the features was HOC-HI, "the spotted giant Cannibal chief, Verily one of Nature's Marvels."

Hoc-Hi was not the only giant on the show. Five other Great Giants were claimed, "A Giant Horse. A Giant Camel. A Giant Emu. Giant Men and Women."

Orton pointed out to the public that, "The day of Little Shows is Past," and advised the populace to "Save your money for the Marvel of the Age. Do not be deceived. The Contracts are made and we will surely be in Girard, Friday, August 8, 1884, AND NO OTHER DAY."

The *Press* ran handouts on July 27 and August 7, and thereafter was done with the show, making no mention of the events of circus day or even acknowledging the show's arrival

For the Yates Center date August 9, the show advertised that it was "The Finest Railroad Show ever in Yates Center." Basically, the advertising was identical to that in the Girard *Press* with a few amendments and additions.

The 7 famous lady riders was now 9; and the 5 open dens in the street parade was dou-

bled to 10. Added features were "Salomon-ski's Troupe of Educated Russian Horses. The Titanic Bubalipis, a native of Central Africa--only one in captivity. Russian Roller Skaters, Spanish Spade Dancers. Hindoo Jugglers. East Indian Snake Charmers. More Foreign Features than any other show on earth! More Free Show than all the others combined."

Orton admonished the reader to "See an Honest Show, something to remember and talk about for years."

Eight wagon loads of people came from Neosho Falls to see the circus according to the *Yates Center News*, Which was less than enchanted with the Anglo-American.

"The Great Anglo-American, four shows in one, three ringed concern has come and gone and we can not very well refrain from saying that the part exhibiting here was not up to a very high standard. Some of the performers were very good but the jesting was low bred and vulgar while the complaints of being swindled, actually beaten out of money, were of too frequent occurrences not to be heeded. The menagerie was not extensive by any means, several members of the animal kingdom not being represented, As a show, Sam Kahl's 3,000 ox, on exhibition here that day, could discount it."

A handout published in the *Allen County Courant* concerning the Iola exhibitions of August 14, raised an interesting question of show finances; "The single fact that this Colossal Combination requires more tents than any other existing show, will bear irrefutable testimony to its comparative immensity, and

Chang, the Chinese Giant, appeared with the Barnum and London Circus when it played Kansas dates in 1884. Pfening Archives.



to the reflecting mind comes the enigma: How can a combination so vast and one requiring for its daily expenditure, such a necessary enormous outlay of money every take enough money in at its doors to make its financial success a certainty? We give it up! But from the nerve its plucky managers evince in assembling and putting before the people a show of such unprecedented magnitude, it would seem that they are strong in the belief that there is no limit to public patronage when features are piled upon features and are massed in such astounding proportions, as the union of their various popular amusement ventures have enabled them to accomplish."

Meeting the daily nut has always been of great importance to showmen, and somehow Orton managed, but it is quite possible that the press department exaggerated a trifle--or more.

"The vast crowd of men, women and children that came to see the show at Iola last Thursday," commented the *Courant*, "was a living illustration of the fact that it pays to advertise.

"It was a success in every particular," was the opinion of the Kansas *Cosmos*, referring to the exhibitions at Council Grove August 16.

Continuing, the *Cosmos* reported that, "A soaking rain in the morning which lasted until nearly 10 o'clock no doubt prevented a great many country people from coming in, but before noon our streets were lined with people. The procession was far above the average and heartily enjoyed by all lookers on. The performance under the tent gave entire satisfaction and a great many features met with flattering marks of approval. We must say Mr. Orton has one of the best disciplined shows that have ever visited our city. We saw no drunkenness, or heard no loud or abusive language from any of the employees, which gave the whole affair an air of respectability that most circuses cannot boast of. The attendance was large at both the morning and evening and Mr. Orton and those who attended were well satisfied with the day's proceedings."

At Junction City August 18, the show drew a large crowd morning and evening, but the *Weekly Union* thought the acting was only "fair" and the menagerie "rather limited."

Orton's exhibitions advertised for August 21 at McPherson brought a paranoid reaction from Sells Brothers who had the town booked for September 8.

The *Freeman* reported after the show had come and gone that, "The Anglo-American Circus that exhibited here Thursday of last week was only ordinary. The street parade was very good considering the weather. The menagerie had but few animals in it, but they were in good condition. The ring performance was of the usual style. The trapeze act by two little boys was good: also the



**WEDNESDAY, AUG. 13, 1884.**

Everything new and bright. The model show of the world. Do not fail to come in town early and see the

**Grand and Glorious Street Parade. A Solid Mile of Golden Glitter.**

**31 DENS OF BRUTE BEASTS.**

The Whole World Contributing.

5 Open Dens in Street Parade. 12 Famous Equestrians, 7 World-Renowned Lady Riders, 3 Famous Clowns, Performing Lions, Performing Hyenas, Performing Leopards, Performing Camels,

**HOC-HI,**

THE SPOTTED GIANT CANNIBAL CHIEF.

Verte one of Nature's Marvels.

**FIVE GREAT GIANTS,**

A Giant Horse, A Giant Camel, A Giant Ewe, Giant Men and Women. Don't forget that this is a genuine exhibition of Four Great Shows, requiring one mile of演進地圖. The day of Little Shows are Past. The day of Great Shows is the day of the Age. Do not be deceived. The Contracts are made, and all streets to be in

**EUREKA, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13, 1884.**  
**AND ON NO OTHER DAY.**

Hoc-Hi, the spotted giant cannibal chief was featured in this Anglo-American newspaper ad in 1884. Kansas State Historical Society.

tight rope performance by a woman. Theshow was free from swindlers and black legs. The performance was well patronized."

The McPherson *Weekly Press* reported that "The Anglo-American circus was much better than it had been represented; in fact, it was about as good as any circus that has visited this place."

The fat man called on the *German-American Advocate* at Hays City on August 23, and commented to the editor that the "country is much improved since he was here with Sells brothers two years ago."

"The great Orton's circus came last Saturday as advertised and was the best that has ever exhibited in this city," according to the *Advocate*. "The riding was grand, the jumping excellent, the menagerie all that was promised, and the crowd was immense."

At Hays the Anglo-American played matinee only, on account of the long jump to Denver, 350 miles on the Union Pacific.

Orton found good business in Colorado, but while en route from Fort Collins to Golden tragedy struck the train in the vicinity of Greeley. The disaster was picked up by the Kansas press and reported in nearly every newspaper in Kansas. The story as reported in the *Border Star*, Columbus, September 5, is quoted in its entirety.

#### "CREMATED CIRCUS MEN."

"Greeley, Col.,--August 30.--The burning of a circus car nine miles north of this place, was attended with indescribable horrors. The burning car was next to the engine in a train of seventeen cars containing Orton's Anglo-American Circus, which left Fort Collins about midnight for Golden over the Greeley, Salt Lake & Pacific Road. The train was nearing Windsor, a small station near Greeley, running about twenty-five miles an hour, when Engineer Collepriest discovered that the car was on fire. He reversed the engine and then opened the whistle valve. There were sixty men in the car, arranged in three tiers of berths on either side. The forward side door was closed and men in bunks sleeping against it. The rear door was also closed and the men who awoke discovered the lower unoccupied berth next to it containing rubbish on fire, filling the car with smoke and cutting off escape in that direction. The

#### ONLY MEANS OF EGRESS

was through a small window between the car and the engine. John Rive, of Folgerton, Wis., and Elmer Millet, of Iowa, crowded through the opening and tried to pass in water from the engine tank. Owing to the suffocating gases it was difficult to arouse the sleepers. Some were kicked and bruised in a shocking manner, and finally pitched out of the window. The screams of those unable to get through the blockaded aperture were terrifying. The wind glare of the flames of the burning car showed the victims outside who writhed in agony on the cactus beds, and caused the wild beasts in the adjoining car to become frantic with terror, making an appalling scene. The performers who occupied the rear car gazed with white faces at

#### THE AWFUL SPECTACLE.

In the midst of the confusion, two or three heroic souls appeared equal to the occasion and bravely cut a way to their companions to find them already in the agony of death. Alfred Lake, in charge of the animals, and his friend Kent, walked over the cactus in their bare feet, poured buckets of oil on the blistered unfortunates and wrapped them in blankets. An old Pacific coast sailor named McDonald, formerly with Forepaugh's show, was terribly burned, the flesh hanging in shreds. The heartrending cries of the men dying within the car, the roar of the flames and the howling of the animals made the scene beyond description. The odor of roasting flesh, and the distant

#### CRY OF THE COYOTES

added to the horror of the scene. The voices

of the dying grew fainter and soon ceased. Meantime the engine had gone to Greeley for assistance, returning with Dr. Jesse Howes, President of the State Medical Association. Many of the rescued, on being pulled through the small window, had their limbs broken, joints dislocated, hands and feet burned off, and roasted trunks. A body was found in one place, legs in another, and piles of roasted, shriveled carcasses were pulled out of the ruins. At daylight a flat car carried the charred bodies into Greeley for interment. The County Commissioners buried the remains in a huge coffin, seven feet wide and ten feet long, in the Greeley cemetery. Rev. Mr. Reed of the Presbyterian Church, conducted the funeral services. The Coroner empaneled a jury, who were

UNABLE TO LEARN

the cause of the fire or any important facts, as the manager, with the remainder of the company, left immediately for Golden, to fill an afternoon engagement. It is impossible to get a complete list of the dead, as many had been engaged but a day or two, and their names are unknown. The names of the dead as far as learned are as follows: Alex, McLeod, Marinette, Wis.; Thomas McCarthy, Independence, Iowa; John Kelly, New York city; the others were known as Silver Thorn, Andy, French, Frank, George, Smithie and one unknown."

This 1884 Orton newspaper ad lists 31 massive dens of beasts and 10 open cages in the parade but doesn't mention an elephant. Circus World Museum collection.

"Denver, Col., August 30.--The following is a list of the sufferers of the circus car fire now at St. Luke's Hospital, this city: F. F. Fairbanks, aged twenty-two, arms, legs and face badly burned; Albert Borden, aged eighteen, Logan, Kas., arms and face badly burned; Thomas Golden, aged seventeen, Detroit, Mich., very badly burned on back and legs; M. J. Simmerman, aged eighteen, St. Louis, arms, legs, back and face badly burned; Frank King, Menominee, Mich., badly burned about the hands and feet; Michael McGlina, aged twenty-eight, of Holton, Mich., face and hands badly burned. He will probably die. A number of the rescued agree that in the car were two barrels of gasoline which were exploded either by sparks from the engine or from a torch with which the men were accustomed to light themselves to bed."

The two accounts ran consecutively, as above.

Long before Orton arrived in Burr Oak, Friday, September 19, trouble was brewing in the village, as reported by the Mankato *Review*, May 21: "The Evans who was running the restaurant in Burr Oak where the unfortunate Miss Frazier destroyed her young life, and who 'skipped' after the sad

# ORTON'S Anglo-American RAILWAY CIRCUS !



—AND—

# Menagerie

WILL EXHIBIT AT

MONROE,

Monday, July 21

WE TRAVEL BY OUR OWN  
SPECIAL CARS.

## THE MODEL SHOW OF THE WORLD.



31 Massive Dens of Brte Beasts;  
10 Open Cages in the Parade;  
12 Famous Female Riders;  
20 Malo Equestrians;  
5 Famous Clowns;  
Performing Lions and Tigers;  
Educated Camels;  
Russian Roller Skaters,  
European Bicycle Experts;  
East India Nutch Girl Dancers;  
Hindoo Jugglers & Snake Charmers  
3 Rings full of Novelties.

affair, returned to Burr Oak last week crazy, either with liquor or from the brute demon within him, and for a time inaugurated a regular reign of terror there, by walking up and down the street threatening death and destruction. He was finally captured and brought to Mankato and tried for insanity, it took three days to settle the question, but this afternoon the jury decided that he should be placed under guardianship."

The *Jewell County Monitor*, May 28, reported the outcome of the sanity trial:

"Mankato, Kan., May 21st, 1884. State of Kansas, Jewell County. "We, the Jury in the case of George Evans, having heard the evidence in the case are satisfied that said George Evans is not a fit person to run at large without proper restraint on account of partial insanity, and we would recommend the Judge of the Court to appoint a Guardian for said George Evans. A. B. Peters, M. D., Ira Harrison, J. L. Allen, Manoah Stone, A. H. Butts, I. C. Kyle.

"The Judge acted according to these recommendations, and appointed one of the parties subpoenaed from Burr Oak to convict Evans of insanity, as his guardian, and if he is not a reliable party why was he brought here to appear against a lunatic. Do the *Herald* or *Reveille* wish to imply that they would produce the evidence of unreliable parties to secure of a man on the grounds of insanity.

"The best justification a man can have is the good result of his action and in this case the result has been highly satisfactory. The guardian appointed took the whiskey away from Evans and forbid the druggist selling him any, which, if they observe, will, we think, prevent any outbreaks of insanity."

The biggest story in the history of Burr Oak occurred on show day, but failed to make the front page of the *Herald*, appearing on page 4, column 4. As the *Herald* was weekly published every Thursday, the story was not published until September 25.

"SHOT.

"Mayor A. W. Mann, Zig Longnecker and Young O'Neal Shot by Desparados in the Employ of Orton's Circus

"On Friday last Orton's Anglo-American four combined swindles arrived here as advertised (Friday, September 19), The tents were pitched, and after the usual street parade they were rapidly filled with people. All went well, except for ill feeling of some toward the gang of thieves and sharpers, who plied their business vigorously, both within the tents and out. At, or rather after, the evening performance, however, a disturbance took place which will be long remembered by our citizens. The particulars in the case are as follows:

"During the concert in the evening one Clint Elliot, of Mankato, who was drunk, made a good deal of noise by sneering at the thinness of the entertainment, and in consequence got into an altercation with Claude Powers, adopted son of Miles Orton, the pro-

prietor. Officer L. Lacey came up in time to prevent blows, and ordered Elliot to be quiet, which order he obeyed, but not till the showmen had told him that he was 'spotted' and would be 'attended to after the performance.' True to the threats made as soon as the performance ended, Orton's men began hurrying the audience from the tent, telling them that there would be a fuss. Just as Elliot, still in charge of Lacey, emerged from the tent, he was struck on the head with a tent stake in the hands of one of the showmen, and as Lacey was stooping to help him up, he, too, was hit twice in the back with a sand bag. Thinking it was going to be pretty hot for him, Mr. Lacey made tracks for town to procure help. Upon his return he was greeted with oaths and threats from the showmen, but it is probable no open fight would have taken place had not two or three unauthorized persons, among them George Evans, our half crazy ex-restaurant keeper, commenced to rail back at the circus men, threatening to cut the ropes. This appeared to enrage Orton's

roughs beyond all bounds, and with the circus cry of 'Hey Rube!' they grabbed tent stakes and proceeded to deal about them right and left. Several bystanders, in all about twenty, were knocked down, and Evans was pretty badly pounded, a punishment he well deserved. As the showmen were in the majority they succeeded in making the crowd outside the tents betake themselves to a distance for safety. They however followed the circus men to the depot where they were loading their wagons and tents on the cars, and another war of words and clubs followed in which Lew Hawley, who should have been in the jug for drunkenness was pretty roughly handled.

"Mayor Mann was sent for to use his influence to quiet the crowd, and had succeeded in doing so, but just as the train started, Evans, who had been home and got his shot gun arrived on the spot, and fired a shot at the train. At this the showmen began shooting at the crowd about the depot, most of whom were spectators attracted by the disturbance. At the first volley Zig Longnecker, a hard-working blacksmith, and a man wholly innocent of taking any part in the disturbance, was shot through the brain, and fell unconscious upon the platform. At the sec-

ond volley, Mayor Mann was shot in the back and a young man named O'Neal, from the country, was shot in the heel. The firing by the showmen was kept up as long as they thought they could hit any one at the depot. The circus train stopped for the regular train to side track, but when they started on they resumed firing and kept it up till they were fully half a mile from the depot. There are parties here who say they heard Orton order his men to get their 'guns' and fire low, just



The Grafters Charged in a Compact Bunch Like One of Those Football Wedges

This illustration shows a "Hey Rube" similar to what happened on the Orton show in Burr Oak in 1884. Pfening Archives.

as he stepped aboard the train. Upon examination it was found that Longnecker was shot through the brain, the ball entering the right temple and coming out just above the cheek bone on the left side. He died in less than an hour, being wholly unconscious after his fall. Young O'Neal received only a flesh wound in the heel and is now doing as well as could be expected. A. W. Mann was shot in the back, the ball entering just below the shoulder, close to the back bone, and lodging within the body. He is now in critical condition, only his extra strong constitution being in his favor. His physicians say that should he recover his lower extremities will always be paralyzed, making him a helpless cripple.

"Sheriff Johnson started on Saturday morning's train for Washington, Kan., whether the show had gone, to arrest the outfit. Sixteen were arrested and brought to Mankato. The rest were allowed to go their way to Sedalia, Mo., where the show was billed at appear.

"The parties arrested are now undergoing a preliminary examination. It is probable that two or more among them took part in the shooting."

In another column the *Herald* stated, "We feel no hesitancy in saying that whiskey was the prime cause of the sad shooting affair of Friday night. We hope it will be a lesson to some."

Sheriff Dolan of Washington county received a warrant from Burr Oak for the arrest of the guilty men. According to the *Washington Republican*, Sheriff Dolan and his deputies after looking through the crowd assembled for the matinee "picked up 14 of the most guilty looking chaps and lodged them in jail.

"This arrest caused great excitement on the part of the showmen and those who had come in intent on seeing the performance; this scared the biggest portion of the crowd out, who went home, leaving the attendance very small and only a few scared performers to entertain them their half dollar's worth."

At this point rumor took control. It was reported that 150 men were on their way to

Washington by special train "for the purpose of swallowing up Orton's show."

"This report," stated the *Republican*, "was the cause of many showmen passing here and there through the country during that evening and night. But there were enough remained, however, to give a half-way performance in the evening. Shortly after the performance had begun news was received that the mob had reached Greenleaf, and that there were five-hundred citizens on board, and which report was immediately made known in the circus tent, causing great excitement and confusion among both the spectators and showmen. It was then announced that all of the performers were called outside to settle some difficulty and that the performance would have to come to a close for the evening. The inmates did not wait for an order to leave the tent, and had an order been given to that effect there would not have been one among them who could have repeated the speaker's closing remarks. The inmates fairly flew out of the tent, and did not stop until they had reached their homes.

"When the special train arrived from Burr Oak arrived, the mob was found to number only 39 whose anger was largely spent by the journey and the remaining fire squelched

by Sheriff Dolan who was determined to keep the peace. Dolan and his deputies returned to the lot and arrested four more men, for a total of 18. The show was quickly tearing down and the 'mob' passed several wagons on their way to the cars, and the drivers of same showing signs of terrible uneasiness, fearing at any time the crowd would open fire on them, but were allowed to pass on down to the depot. There had been so many of the showmen vanquished by that time that they had hardly enough help to load the wagons and those who were at work were so frightened by the crowd which thronged the depot, that they at several times came near upsetting several cages. The proceedings were going on between the hours of 10 and 11 o'clock p. m., and the night was unusually dark and made the affair all the more exciting."

Miles Orton was among those arrested, but proved his innocence to the sheriff and was released in time to accompany the show to Missouri. All accounts indicate that Orton was helpful and cooperative.

When it came time for the "mob" of 39 to return home they received a surprise. The Central Branch of the Missouri Pacific had charged them \$75 for the special train from Burr Oak to Washington, and the passengers thought they had bought a round trip. The Missouri Pacific thought otherwise and demanded \$140 for the return--and cash only. The hat was passed and the money collected, but there came another demand from the railroad. The *Burr Oak Herald*, in italics, reported "They wanted extra pay for the fifteen prisoners and a party of six, including Sheriff Johnson." The extra charge was ignored. "Although it was a mighty nasty trick on the part of the railroad company."

The situation at Washington prior to the evening performance was not entirely grim and threatening, according to a paragraph in the *Republican*.

"The night of the circus here three young couples attended that exhibition of all that is wonderful in nature, art and skill, but before they reached the pavilion they encountered a mud-hole, and two of the gentlemen politely picked up their lumps of sweetness and carried them to safety across the chasm, while the third gentlemen undertook to perform the same generous act with his damsel but was foiled in the attempt, and was himself carried over the puddle by the girl. This particular girl has strength and a regard for her fellow also."

The *Herald*, October 2, corrected an oversight in its original report of the "riot," as it usually called the affair, and reported the incredible hard luck of O. W. Francis

"Last week in speaking of those wounded in the circus fight we neglected to mention O. W. Francis, who is now barely able to move around from its effects. He had been sick for some time, and was quite feeble on the day of the show, but managed to get

over, and was on the ground when the tent fight commenced. At the first outbreak he started to get away, but being quite weak made poor headway, and was overtaken by one of the showmen, who hit him a blow in the face with a club, knocking him down,

## WAIT! WAIT! WAIT!



"Behold the Conquering Hero Comes!"

TO ASHLAND IN ITS ENTIRETY!

On its Own Special Train of Twenty-Six Cars!

Wait for the Big Railroad Show.

AT ASHLAND

Saturday, August 11.



AND FOR THAT DAY AND DATE ONLY

The ANGLO-AMERICAN CIRCUS



ROYAL GERMAN MENAGERIE, LE GRAN CIRCO ZOOLOGICO,

AND MYSTIC CIRCUS OF JAPAN, THAI PLING-TO,

GIBETH P.T.A. THIS SEASON ONLY.

A Consolidation of the Four Greatest Shows!

A Union of the Four Best Shows!

THE FIVE GREAT GIANTS ARE WITH THE GIANT SHOWS.

THE MONSTER WHALE, THE GIANT BLACK CAMEL, THE GIANT ANT BEAR,

THE GIANT HORSE, THE GIANT BEARS.

We also exhibit the TITANIC JUHALIPUS, the SACRED WHITE CAMEL, and the MIDGET CAMEL.

Performers, Performers, Performers, Acting Queen, Queen of the Whole

WILD BEAST SHOW FREE FOR NOTHING IN THE STREETS!



"HECTOR"

THE TEN THOUSAND DOLLAR RIDING CANINE.

THE GREATEST RIDERS ARE WITH THE GREATEST SHOWS!



MILES ORTON and little ALLIE and BERNARD are with us. Mlle LEONORA, Heroine of the flaming Zoue.

This Anglo-American newspaper ad was used in Ashland, Wisconsin in 1884. Circus World Museum collection.

and badly bruising one eye. He was also struck in such a manner as to break one of his ribs, and a bullet passed through his pants leg just below the knee, leaving a disagreeable reminder of how a man's flesh feels when scorched by a ball. Orin doesn't want any more circus in his (sic)."

When the Anglo-American train stopped in Atchison on the 21st of September, a reporter from the Kansas City *Times* asked a few questions of Orton, who expressed his sorrow over the tragedy. The reporter was shown a number of bullet holes in the side of the train. The reporter asked "Were any of your men injured?"

Orton replied, "No, not seriously. A horse tender named Cook was shot in the side, but it resulted only in a slight flesh wound."

The show moved on to Butler, Missouri.

The press in the 1880s was quick to announce the imminent death of any injured person. The *Burr Oak Herald*, the *Jewell County Monitor*, Mankato, and the *Mankato Review* accurately reported the death of Ezekial "Zig" Longnecker, but all of them announced that the mayor of Burr Oak, A. W. Mann, was certain to die, and the *Herald* reported that the boy who was shot in the heel might not live.

There was no doubt about Zig Longnecker. The bullet entered his right temple and came out his left ear, and death was nearly instantaneous. Zig left a widow, and, depending on the paper reporting, five or six small children without money for the bare necessities. The townspeople established a fund to help the family get reestablished.

In a way, Mann was also killed. The bullet that struck him severed his spine and for the rest of his life he was paralyzed below the wound. His convalescence was long and painful.

Andrew W. Mann was a person of diverse achievements. In the Civil War he served in both the army and navy. He was the second mayor of Burr Oak, and after the shooting served three terms as a councilman. He was prominent in Republican politics, having been a delegate to the national convention in Chicago in 1884. Mann was the Republican candidate for the Kansas House of Representatives at the time of his wounding.

The Democrat opposition claimed that Mann would be unable to serve if elected to the Legislature, but Drs. J. E. Hawley and A. D. Peters issued statements a few days before the election claiming that Mann's health had improved sufficiently to erase all doubts as to his ability to serve.

Mann won the election with 1245 votes to 827 for A. H. Heath, the Democrat candidate, but the opposition was correct as Mann never took his seat in the Kansas Legislature.

The *Monitor* of December 10 reported that, "A. W. Mann is not recovering as fast as might be hoped for. He has a severe chill last week and doubts are entertained of his recovery."

The *Washington County Register*, May 15, 1886, stated that, "Hon. A. W. Mann, the victim of the Burr Oak circus riot twenty months ago, is now able to be wheeled downtown on good days in his wheeled chair." Mann had been active in real estate promotions and in the dry goods business, and was a partner in the Exchange bank. At the time of his death, May 9, 1890, Mann was postmaster at Burr Oak, and was succeeded by his wife.

Court action began September 24, 1884, before J. W. Enoch, Justice of the Peace of Center Township in Jewell County, Case No. 772, Criminal Action. Defendants were Jared Horkheimer, John Northrup, Louis Baars, Richard Ordway, Robert Taylor, Robert Leonard, W. O. Cassel, James Conley, William Long and John Robinson, who in

the language of the complaint, "did then and there, unlawfully, feloniously, premeditatedly, deliberately, and of malice aforethought kill and murder one Ezekiel Longnecker."

Also arrested on the same warrant and brought before Justice Enoch were W. W. Smith, Charles Wood, William Campbell, J. J. Mull, Henry Keller and John Lawler, named in a separate complaint.

All of the defendants plead not guilty, and were ordered held in the county jail until a further hearing on October 1.

Robert Taylor was discharged at the request of the State's Attorney prior to October 1.

On October 1, the court released Horkheimer, Northrup, Baars, Ordway, Leonard and Cassel on \$200 recognizance each and under a subpoena to arrest as witnesses at the meeting of the District Court of Jewell County on the first Monday of December.

Conley, Long and Robinson were released unconditionally. Campbell, Mull, Keller and Lawler simply disappeared from the court records and it must be said that the charges against them were dismissed.

In a separate filing Henry W. Smith, commonly called "Buckshot," and Charles Wood were charged with the killing of "one Ezekiel Longnecker with a revolving pistol with gunpowder and leaden bullets."

Smith and Wood appeared before Justice Enoch on September 24, and were ordered to be held in the Jewell county jail and returned to court on October 1 for further hearing. The result of the hearing was that Smith and Wood were returned to jail to await trial the first Monday of December.

County Attorney S. D. Decker was such a poor writer of legalese that some of his work is amusing. On November 22, Decker filed the following:

#### "INFORMATION FOR MURDER

"In the name and by the authority of the State of Kansas I S. D. Decker County Attorney of said county who prosecutes for and in behalf of said State in all courts sitting in and for said County and being duly empowered to inform of offences committed in said County of Jewell come now here and give the court to understand and be informed that one Henry W. Smith and Charles Wood on to wit the 19th day of September A. D. 1884 & in the County of Jewell in the State of Kansas with revolving pistols had and held in their hands loaded and charged with gunpowder and leaden bullets, then and there willfully deliberately and premeditatedly with malice and aforethought and with

intent to kill in and upon one Ezekiel Longnecker did make an assault; and the said Henry W. Smith and Charles Wood with the said revolving pistols loaded and charged as afore said had and held in their hands, as aforesaid them and there willfully deliberately premeditatedly and of their malice afore

wherein the killing of another is justifiable or excusable."

Charles Wood was found guilty of third degree manslaughter.

Henry W. Smith, "Buckshot," was deemed guilty of murder in the second degree which Judge Clark defined as "murder which is committed maliciously but without deliberation and premeditation."

On December 14, 1884, sentence was handed down. Smith received ten years and Wood was given three.

A receipt was issued by the Office Kansas State Penitentiary, Lansing, December 15, for "the bodies of Henry W. Smith and Charles Wood."

As Sheriff O. F. Johnson and his deputy J. L. Allen, were returning to Mankato after delivering Smith and Wood to the penitentiary, they were interviewed by a reporter from the Atchison *Champion*, between trains.

"While the result of the riot was terrible, Sheriff Johnson says the feeling against the circus people is not so intense as had been reported, and a heavier sentence than ten years for Smith would not have been approved by public sentiment. The evidence adduced at the trial established that the circus people received great provocation and during the night performers of the

show were insulted, annoyed and embarrassed in their work by drunken men, and that the shooting was inaugurated by one Evans, a cranky citizen of Burr Oak, who ran home after his shot gun and returned to the depot. The men who were held as witnesses behaved themselves very properly while they were at Burr Oak, and three of them are still in the county and expect to live there. The negro Smith (sic) declares he will return there after the expiration of his sentence. The two prisoners were assigned to the coal shaft."

There is no indication that either Smith or Wood ever returned to Burr Oak.

The mad man, Evans, was arrested shortly after the shooting, but none of the accounts name the charges or the resolution.

*Prisoners in Kansas State Penitentiary 1875-97* describes Smith as being a laborer, 37 years old, 5' 9 1/4" tall, dark complexion, black hair, hazel eyes and as unmarried resident of Michigan. He was discharged in January, 1893.

Wood, according to *Kansas State Penitentiary Prisoner Ledger B*, was a Negro, 18 years old, 5' 10 1/4" tall, single, a laborer from Texas. His behavior as a prisoner was rated "fair" and he was allowed 147 commutation days, and was released July 12, 1887.

One of those arrested and released liked



He Draws From the Pile the Envelope Which I Have Marked With My Thumb-Nail, and Takes Out the Card

A grifter and his three card monte game as may have been played in the Orton Anglo-American side show in 1884. Pfening Archives.

thought did discharge and shoot off, to against upon and through the head of said Ezekiel Longnecker one of said leaden bullets out of their pistols aforesaid did willfully, deliberately, premeditatedly and of their malice aforethought then and there give said Ezekiel Longnecker then and there instantly died. Wherefore the said County Attorney alleges that said Henry W. Smith and Charles Wood in the manner and by the means aforesaid did then and there willfully deliberately premeditatedly and of their malice aforethought kill and murder said Ezekiel Longnecker contrary to the Statutes in such cases made and provided and against the peace and dignity of the State of Kansas."

When tried in the District Court of Jewell County, the case number remained 772. Judge Clark A. Smith in his instructions to the jury defined manslaughter in the third degree.

"Manslaughter in the third degree so far as it can be applicable to this case is defined to be 'The killing of another, in the heat of passion, without a design to effect death, by a dangerous weapon, in any case except

the town so well that he stayed in Mankato for the winter. The story of Robert Leonard was told in three consecutive weekly issues of the Mankato *Review*, beginning October 8.

"Mr. R. T. Leonard, of Orton's circus, has sent for cloth to make a hot air balloon in which he will make three or more ascensions from Mankato, the first one on the 22nd of the present month. He has been in the business for several years, and thoroughly understands it, having made over a thousand ascensions on the trapeze bar."

October 15: "Prof. R. T. Leonard is busy making his big balloon, and will have it completed before the 22nd. It is 32 feet long and 64 feet in circumference. If the weather is propitious he expects to go up in the air to the height of a mile and a half, performing on the trapeze bar."

October 22: "Prof. Leonard's balloon went up in fire today. During the process of filling it with hot air the wind swayed it from side to side and prevented the filling to such an extent that the coal oil was used in the furnace to produce heat. Too much was thrown in at a time by the assistant and the blaze which flashed up in the balloon ignited it and in a moment it was in ashes, disappointing an immense crowd who had collected to witness the ascension, as well as Prof. Leonard, who had worked both day and night to

get the balloon ready. The cloth of the balloon was not what was wanted or it would have retained the heat better and the ascent would have been made all right. Leonard says he will have a larger and better balloon by spring if he has to work like a slave to earn the money to purchase cloth, and he will yet give the people of Mankato a balloon ascension."

Orton was back in Kansas September 29, at Oswego; September 30, at Columbus and October 1, at Pittsburg.

At Oswego, the *Independent* reported, following the exhibitions, that the show "received very good patronage. While the menagerie is only fair, some parts of the ring performance could not be beaten, and everybody appeared satisfied. We have not heard of any gambling schemes being practiced on the unsuspecting, and everything passed off quietly."

The paper at Columbus ignored the presence of the circus, but the Pittsburg *Smelter*, October 4, had some interesting news: "Deputy Marshall Prichett created much amusement by attempting to arrest the drunk man at the show. It was sometime before he could be persuaded that the performer was not really drunk and that it was all in the play."

"Part of the showman band quit here Wednesday. The show had been running two bands, but one of them had dwindled down

were added to the other band, and the rest let to nearly nothing, and part of the remainder out.

"The show had a good patronage while here, and gave pretty good satisfaction.

"G. F. Bates, General agent for Hunter's Circus and Menagerie, will be in Pittsburg next Saturday (October 11) with bill wagon, to bill the town for Hunter's show." The Hunter brothers took advantage of Orton's presence, or perhaps it was the other way around, to do some negotiating with the bigger show.

The *Smelter* reported October 25, that, "Chas. Hunter purchased one box car and one flat car from the Anglo-American show this week. They are now on the switch in this City, and are being painted up in fine style. The old passenger coach which has been standing on the track here all season has been painted up in fine style, and now looks like a new car."

Where Miles Orton went after playing Pittsburg is not known to the writer, but wherever he went it is hoped that he went in peace and safety and played nothing but full houses, for such a season as that of 1884 is close to all that a man can bear.

Research funded by grants from: Wolfe's Camera Shops, Inc., Topeka, Kansas and First National Bank of Kansas, Topeka.

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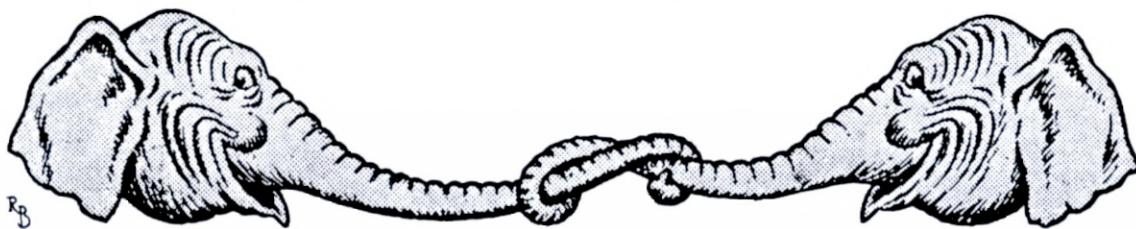
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